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YOND LIFE

or *Study of Immortality*

To

W^o Kane

in grateful remembrance

W^o Bridgman

on the Saints Day

1949

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(Slattery)

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LIFE BEYOND LIFE

By Charles Lewis Slattery

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LIFE BEYOND LIFE

A Study of Immortality

BY

CHARLES LEWIS SLATTERY, D.D.

RECTOR OF GRACE CHURCH, NEW YORK



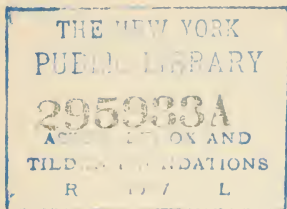
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PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION

BESIDES making sundry slight changes and corrections, I have added in this edition a new chapter on Prayers for the Dead.

C. L. S.

GRACE CHURCH RECTORY,
NEW YORK,
27 August, 1913.

P R E F A C E

THE world tends to become a world of specialists. As knowledge grows more profound, men feel the need of confining their investigation and research to one department. Yet, such investigation, such research, thorough as it often is, is almost always one-sided, only half true, because it fails to relate itself to other realms of knowledge equally alive, equally true. When a man looks over the wall of his particular enclosure and attempts to relate his work to the work of another, he is, not infrequently, soundly rapped for his audacity. The eminent physicist, Sir Oliver Lodge, has been graciously pleased to speak often of theology; but because his "views" have not the perspective of technical theologians, certain ecclesiastical critics pour scorn upon him for his meddlesomeness. The world is going to fall out the gainer, how-

ever, from such attempts of specialists to look sympathetically upon other fields than their own. We may rightly thank the specialist for venturing upon some general description.

This little book on Immortality is frankly from the standpoint of a Christian believer, whose chief interest is in theology. But it has genuine sympathy and respect for the philosopher and the scientist who know not whether to look for an abiding city or to fold their hands for a final rest. These pages may possibly seem unfair to the exact attitude which distinguished philosophers and scientists would maintain. But perhaps, should they look into them, they will forgive misrepresentation, because unintentional, and because to see truth whole is a task worth many blunders, if to attempt it may become a habit.

C. L. S.

FARIBAULT, MINNESOTA,

15 May, 1907.

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LIFE BEYOND LIFE

LIFE BEYOND LIFE

CHAPTER I

THE NEED OF EMPHASIS

FOR a good many years men have been saying that he is a wise man who lives this life, and thinks little of any life to come. There was once a tonic in such counsel, for it brought impractical dreamers to a sharp sense of the real uses of this present world. A large number of excellent people, in their zealous expectation of the joys of heaven, had been despising the God-given joys of earth. To an extent, therefore, it was a wholesome rebuke which told men to live their life here, and to forget what might come hereafter.

Even the Christian Church has shared in administering this rebuke; perhaps not quite consciously, but none the less effectively. To be sure, Christian people

have not ceased to sing of “Jerusalem the golden,” and of the

“Sweet and blessed country,
The home of God’s elect!”

They even sing, though they have not often meant it, —

“For thee, O dear, dear country,
Mine eyes their vigils keep.”

The more matter of fact among us have explained that we sing these snatches of a great mediæval hymn because the poetry is exquisite, or, even more accurately, because composers have been moved to set the words to inspiring music. We have prayed that “we may so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal,” — but, intelligently enough, we have pointed out that the eternal is the one reality of our present existence. We have prayed that “we, running the way of God’s commandments, may obtain His gracious promises, and be made partakers of His heavenly treasure,” — but these words, which once breathed of heaven, now beseech the Father for a paradise on earth. The

Easter sermons, year by year, have told somewhat of a life to come, but, between the Easters, that has been a rare sermon which has told of immortality and heaven. The sermons of recent decades have concerned themselves largely with the life that now is. The Church, in spite of hymns and liturgy, has followed the spirit of the age and has ceased to look beyond the gates of time.

If the lesson was needed, we must now grant that it has been thoroughly learned. The ecclesiastic has learned to love this world so well that he does all in his power to make buildings and services of heavenly dignity. The humanitarian Christian makes it his chief business, not to comfort his impoverished parishioners with dreams of a future where Dives and Lazarus change places, but immediately to lift them from their misery, by means of education, companionship, sympathy, justice. Even the man who abandons theology and turns religion into ethical culture, and, in the process, denies himself all hope of future life, is brave and good to the end. He reminds himself

that even if this world be all, life is well worth living, and he says to himself words such as Henry IV said when Crillon came up too late to share in a great victory: "Hang yourself, brave Crillon! we fought at Arques, and you were not there."¹ In other words, the candid soul who allows himself no dreams of heaven exults in the glory of the life that now is.

But sane, productive, heroic as this attitude may be in its different phases, we are compelled to ask whether it is an attitude which the world can longer afford to indulge. If the future life is a fact, this life surely has a vital relationship to it. It may be brave to live this life as if it were all. But, if there is a life beyond, it is sadly stupid to live a part of life as if it were the whole.

One reason why men have ceased to take account of heaven is because the only evident reason why certain men who longed to be bad nevertheless straightened their course toward virtue, was the selfish hope that thus they might avoid hell. Men with good red blood in their

¹ Quoted by H. M. Salter, "Index," August 24, 1882.

veins have said, in view of such a spectacle, "Let us do right because it is right; let us not be scared toward righteousness." But our sympathy for such a courageous attitude ought not to blind us to the human privilege of looking forward to the divine compensations of life. We may remove the emphasis from fear and place it upon hope. It ought to be incentive to fine living to recall that all the virtue we can build into our characters will count not only for a few feverish years, but for a blithesome eternity. Everything becomes infinitely worth while. Especially is this true for those who in this life are cruelly handicapped. The poor man who feels the conditions pressing down upon him may look forward to the freer opportunity where all his integrity and industry will count exactly for what they are. The woman who is a hopeless invalid, chained to the narrowest possible environment, may legitimately look forward to the beautiful day when she may step forth free into new life, — the life where all the character stored up by patience, brave endurance of pain, an

always expanding love, may do the deeds which earthly limitations make impossible. A soldier can do astonishing deeds when he knows the charge not only is fatal, but leads to defeat. He can do deeds passing human comprehension if his general inspires him with the confidence that the charge is to be the decisive stroke which shall win the victory. It kindles admiration to see hopeless men go doggedly to their duty. But it makes the heart throb with exultation to see men go forth with heads high and eyes gleaming, eager to do their best because they see ahead the inevitable joy. We need heroes as much as ever, but no hero is more of a hero by shutting his eyes to the certain future. Let us pray that our heroes be not blind.

Then one hears the quavering voice of some scrupulous doubter. "We are not sure," is the cry, "whether there is life beyond this life; sometimes we feel that this life is all." This doubt is not the fling of the hardened outsider, but is quite often the fear of the tender Christian heart. Sometimes it is not a fear,

but almost a hope. Life may have been so full of torture that it seems mockery to be rewarded with more of the grewsome thing called life. Ending all with death has for a good many Christian people, *at certain times*, no horror. It is true they cannot face the future with the triumphant energy that they have who believe in heaven, but they are calm and resigned about it all: they have no dread of vanishing into nothing.

This attitude, too, one may say is heroic. But must we not contend that it is almost criminal to settle down to such apathetic doubt when so great an incentive toward fine living is at stake? A man who says listlessly that one day he believes in immortality — another, does not — and takes no trouble to discover which day he believes the truth, is little short of a criminal against light. If a man is in earnest, if he is convinced that he will live with more zest and do more brilliant righteousness if he looks forward to life beyond life, then it is incumbent upon him that he leave no

stone unturned to assure himself of the truth. If there is a heaven, he must know it.

Earnest men are beginning to cast away all indifference. Those who have stood apart from distinctly theological claims are giving the dignity of their names to the Society for Psychical Research. When Sir Oliver Lodge, Professor William James, and the recent Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mr. Balfour, stand among the leaders of this effort to test all seeming indications of the future life, you know that science, philosophy, statesmanship, are not indifferent to this absorbing problem.

I have an impression, — perhaps it is ill-founded, — that the Church has been slow to contribute to this important discussion. If it is said that the steady faith of the Church is sufficient, and needs no heralding, or propping up with reasons, one must answer sadly that a good many estimable people are unconvinced, and the Church needs to speak clearly, first emphasising the use of such a belief, and

then showing how soundly reasonable the belief is. To keep silence might seem to indicate that the Church had no contribution to make to the subject. It is no mere ghoulisn curiosity which sends people to every revelation which science cautiously makes after interviews with certain carefully guarded mediums. There is a growing sense of the need of putting belief in immortality upon a solid foundation. The Church has therefore an opportunity to meet this sense of need. Preachers, themselves convinced of the beauty of the heavenly country to which we tend, ought to be holding up its glories before a people, who should day by day be thrilled with the lasting value of all virtue, who should endure pain and sorrow with glad manfulness, who should be inspired to do better and better deeds, because all good things are supremely worth while. Time was when people needed to hear, "Forget heaven; do your present task without fear or hope; play the man for to-day." The time for that is past, and a new demand is upon us. It is now not only safe but

right that men, in the hush of sorrow or in the din of a robust task, speak often one to another of heaven, — of its restitutions, of its joy, of its boundless opportunity.

CHAPTER II

THE INSTINCTIVE HOPE

AN egregious mistake of the past was the attempt to argue immortality. To present certain considerations in the form of arguments is inevitably to rouse suspicion, and not infrequently the arguments so brought forth are specious. The deepest truths are beyond argument. There is reality beyond the power of description or definition. The healthy mind—frank, honest, unafraid—reaches valid conclusions which no argument can trace. The instinct of an individual, confirmed by the instinct of the race, must have its valid part in any conviction. To place this instinct in an argument is to ruin its influence. “Read Butler,” said Huxley,¹ “and see to what drivél even his great mind descends when he has to talk about the immortality of

¹ “Life and Letters,” vol. i. p. 260.

the soul! I have never seen an argument on that subject which from a scientific point of view is worth the paper it is written upon. All resolve themselves into this formula: The doctrine of the immortality of the soul is very pleasant and very useful, therefore it is true." So let us be done with arguments, and try to let some strange facts sink into our minds.

I

First of all, then, it is a significant fact that the peoples of the world have been born with the instinctive hope of life after death. Men have lived on this planet for thousands upon thousands of years. In the earth are found the records of old civilisations, of old barbarism, of remote savagery. In these distant ages, we learn, prehistoric peoples believed in immortality. It is from no written record that we learn it, but from the mute eloquence of ancient burying places. The earliest possible traces, I believe, come in the Neolithic Age. With the ashes of the dead are crude vessels used

in that dim past for food. Evidently, says the archæologist, here we have the pathetic, groping testimony that they who buried the dead conceived the truth that the spirit of the dead still lived; so they placed in the grave the only symbol they knew of that which would maintain life. Emerging from these most distant shadows of the past, the student finds in the record of historic times the continuing tradition of immortality. There is locked in the human breast the instinctive hope of a life surviving bodily death.

Of course it must be said that the forms of this expectation have been widely different, in different parts of the earth, in different stages of racial progress. The Nirvâna of the Buddhist is weirdly unlike the Happy Hunting-Ground of an American Indian. The instinctive anticipation of life after death was sometimes enticing, sometimes gruesome. As men tended to more elaborate civilisation, the more thorough-going minds, the philosophers, became doubtful how far this instinct should be trusted. Socrates tore

the instinctive hope to tatters, seeking threads wherewith to weave an argument, and finally said that whatever the outcome he was sure that no evil could befall a good man whether alive or dead. So, too, the Hebrews seem at times to have contented themselves with the idea of national immortality. But to the ordinary soul, the common man, there was the instinctive hope that life for the individual went on after the dissolution of death. Priest and philosopher might argue for extinction, or absorption into an All-Being; the common man might try hard to think as the argument ran, but down in his soul was the inextinguishable hope — the hope of continued life with some sort of personal identity.

Such investigation is difficult. Poets and writers whose words have come down to us are not always representative. We do not wish to know what the most conspicuous man in his generation thought; we wish to know the unspoiled instinct of the forgotten myriads who never followed an argument. We wish to know what is the unhampered instinct of man-

kind. Literary critics, divorcing pages of the past from human life, are apt to say, "When this was written, men did not think of immortality; for lo, the author has not thought of it,—he does not even refer to it!" This argument from silence may show that, at certain times and in certain places, ideas of immortality were too vague to be talked about; but it cannot prove that the human heart—a more or less constant element—was ever *content* to face death as an ending. The shuddering dread of "going down into the pit" and the wail that "all flesh is grass" are simple indications that, whatever they believed, men *wished* that life might go on. One who reads ancient documents as fragments of human experience must know that death has always been abhorrent; and long life, the desire of desires. Theories, beliefs, may have been indifferent or negative; the instinctive hope was kindled with the first spark of human intelligence.

Once more I wish to guard against any thought of using this general instinct as

an argument. Because it has been used as an argument, clever men have replied: "Impressive as such a tradition may be, enticing as is the hope, nothing is proved. The world was for ages thought to be flat: that was the universal instinct. The world was round, nevertheless. So," says the debater, "up go all the instincts of the race in thinnest of smoke." All sorts of replies, some very good, can be made to such a thrust. All I wish to maintain now is that there is such an instinct deep-seated in the race.

II

From time to time men have tried to show that this instinct is not universal. Now and then a man has tried to steel himself against the hope, and to go through life content with the years of earth. I am going to take one striking example, Thomas Huxley. Huxley, as a scientific man, neither denied nor affirmed the immortality of man. "I see no reason," he said, "for believing in it, but, on the other hand, I have no means

of disproving it.”¹ The first great test of his position came when his first son, nearly four years old, died after an illness of forty-eight hours. “As I stood behind the coffin,” he wrote to Kingsley, “. . . with my mind bent on anything but disputation, the officiating minister read, as part of his duty, the words, ‘If the dead rise not again, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.’ I cannot tell you how inexpressibly they shocked me. Paul had neither wife nor child, or he must have known that his alternative involved a blasphemy against all that was best and noblest in human nature. I could have laughed with scorn. What! because I am face to face with irreparable loss, because I have given back to the sources from whence it came, the cause of a great happiness, still retaining through all my life the blessings which have sprung and will spring from that cause, I am to renounce my manhood, and, howling, grovel in bestiality? Why, the very apes know better, and if you shoot their young, the poor brutes grieve

¹ “Life and Letters,” vol. i. p. 234.

their grief out and do not immediately seek distraction in a gorge.”¹ This was in 1860. Later, one who was associated with him during the eighties² wrote of him: “He recognized that the fact of his religious views imposed on him the duty of living the most upright of lives, and I am very much of the opinion of a little child, now grown into an accomplished woman, who, when she was told that Professor Huxley had no hope of future rewards, and no fear of future punishments, emphatically declared, ‘Then I think Professor Huxley is the best man I ever have known.’”³

Now you will wonder if this strong, upright, loving, busy man was contented with living this life finely and believing that death put the period to it. Few men certainly have won so full a sense of accomplishment. He worked hard, effectively, conspicuously. There was no preparation of failure to send him in upon himself for gloomy introspection. As lives go, his life was astonishingly rounded

¹ *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 237.

² Sir Spencer Walpole.

³ *Op. cit.*, vol. ii. pp. 28 f.

and complete. He had the satisfaction of living as a good man, and finding it worth while to be good, with no confidence in a future life. But did he keep out the hope? Let a letter to Mr. Morley give his answer: "It is a curious thing," he wrote, "that I find my dislike to the thought of extinction increasing as I get older and nearer the goal. It flashes across me at all sorts of times with a sort of horror that in 1900 I shall probably know no more of what is going on than I did in 1800. I had sooner be in hell a good deal — at any rate in one of the upper circles, where the climate and company are not too trying. I wonder if you are plagued in this way."¹ Even Thomas Huxley felt the instinctive hope pulling at his heart-strings. One feels how inconsistent the instinct is: even the man who, under the most favorable conditions, determines to banish the hope, hopes in spite of himself.²

For the man who is open to natural instincts it is well to note with what deep

¹ *Op. cit.*, vol. ii. p. 67.

² *Cf. inter alios* Herbert Spencer.

power this hope in immortality asserts itself. Perhaps we can find no better illustration than the frank, sincere nature of the late Phillips Brooks. Once when he was standing in the window of a high building, a friend spoke of the green fields and the beauties of nature. Phillips Brooks looked out over the waste of roofs and chimney tops, and said, "Oh, no! not nature, but this beautiful view. Give me this, for these chimney tops even, stand for life, for humanity, and that is what attracts me, and makes life worth living."¹ It was this love of life which made his preaching wholesome and inspiring. He was fond of quoting:—

"How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to
employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in
joy."

Then, on an Easter morning, he was apt to hurl back the self-complacent denials of men with another quotation:—

"Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
No life that breathes with human breath
Has ever truly long'd for death."

¹ "Life," vol. ii. p. 518.

From an abounding life he proclaimed the invincible love of life. As Huxley tells us how human instinct asserts itself against every hindrance, so in Brooks we see to what high tide the instinct may rise when the flood-gates of willing belief are wide open.

It ought to be admitted that in the first black moment of bereavement the man of faith is apt to see no future. He tells his best friend that he doubts everything, — love, immortality, God. But many a trusting soul can surmount the barrier which death puts before great faith. When Tennyson was dying, his physician told him of a villager, ninety years old, who, knowing death to be near, pined to see his old bedridden wife. They carried her to his side; he pressed his shrunken hand upon her hand, and said in a husky voice, "Come soon," — and shortly died. "True faith," murmured Tennyson. Whether his faith was as simple and childlike, one cannot tell. In any case, we know that Tennyson coveted faith like that. It is not immortality of which I am now speaking,

but only the instinctive desire for immortality. In all grades of people, among all kinds of men, the hope of life is ineradicable. The voice that flaunts its protest is either insincere, or else is the trumped-up conviction of the moment. The rational being comes back inevitably to the world-old cry, "I do not wish to stop with death; I long for life, life, life."

III

There are special times when the instinctive expectation of life beyond life asserts itself with peculiar force. The supreme moment is when a man of wide and noble influence, of heroic work, of surpassing ideals, suddenly drops out of the world as we know it. I am not now speaking of a merely conspicuous person, but of a truly great soul, a soul about whose words and deeds there cluster the ambitions and achievement of thousands of people, a soul that is what we call a stupendous force in the world. To one who stands close to such a powerful person, who sees him alive one day, and who

the next sees him dead, there rises the protest not of a dim hope but of a mighty conviction, "This man is not dead!" When Socrates, light-hearted, self-controlled, in the full command of unrivalled vitality, drank the hemlock, and died before the eyes of his pupils and friends, it must have been infinitely easier to believe Socrates alive than to believe him dead. That voice, that smile, that merry laughter, that keenness, that veracity, that love, enshrined for a time in the body which they had called Socrates, must be somewhere. Had Socrates grown old, feeble, lost his wits little by little, faded away in the forgotten years, then the sceptical Greek could have said, "Death is an ending." But with the life snapped off in the cruel brevity of an evening twilight, when the life was at its full,—*then* it was impossible to believe that his life had stopped.

* I suppose everyone can tell of such a moment of new conviction.¹ Since personal testimony is all that really counts in

¹ Cf. Victor Hugo's speech at the grave of Balzac: "Such coffins proclaim immortality. Do we not say to ourselves here to-day that it is impossible that a great genius in this life can

such matters, I may perhaps be permitted to say that I have known two such times, when men have died in the heat and burden of the day, — men, who kindled all who touched their lives with the fire of their radiant spirits, and who dropped out of this visible life with a suddenness that startled a wide circle of people who had come intimately to depend upon them. In each case I know what I felt and I know what others felt: there came over us all the stubborn assurance that the life so buoyant and rich could not at a stroke be cut off. We were suddenly, instinctively aware how impossible it was to be for one instant doubtful of immortality. For one shining, glorious moment we were sure that the superb life was going on, — as sure as that day would follow night. We said to ourselves no comforting arguments. It was a primary, absolute conviction.¹

Even science is beginning to take note

be other than a great spirit after death?" Though Balzac had been losing health for several years, he died at the height of his fame, only a little more than fifty years old.

¹ An interesting variant of this conviction is in what I believe is a very common instinct; namely, the desire to pray for one's dear ones, recently dead. A rigorous Protestant

of this intangible conviction. Herein we observe how the science of this generation differs from the science of a generation ago. Sir Oliver Lodge has signally¹ pointed out that though it is the essential property of energy "that it can transform itself into other forms, remaining constant in quantity, . . . life does not add to the stock of any known form of energy, nor does death affect the sum of energy in any way." That is the scientific way of giving voice to the intense surprise that the enormous bundle of forces which we call a great man could be snatched out of the environment on which it has been playing, and become nothing. No explanation that the influence goes on, trickling out of the empty reservoir, can really satisfy any rational

told me lately that he was always catching himself praying vehemently for his departed relatives. Of course the one legitimate prayer for the dead is that we ask God to make us trust to His never-failing care and love those who are dear to us, knowing surely that He will do for them better things than we can desire or pray for. And it is right to tell God our love and thought for them. The prayers which doubt God's fatherhood are the prayers for the dead that have made the trouble in Christian history. See Chapter VIII.

¹ "Life and Matter," p. 138.

soul. The life that lived so magnificently on one side of death that ten thousand men felt the glow of it must be living just as magnificently on the other side of death.

As one speaks of the scientific man, one cannot fail to think of the attitude which the scientific man is more and more inclined to take toward Psychical Research. Here again we see a change in the way in which science is viewing life. Of any clear results from such investigation I have now nothing whatever to say. My present contention rests upon the impressive fact that scientific people are daring to look for actual proof from the dead that they still live; for the study and analysis of the reports of so-called "mediums" can mean nothing else. One recalls how in mid-ocean the Atlantic cable broke, and how from the ship men let down the grapnel in the absurd hope of catching the cable in the vast waste of waters. To the amazement of all on board they seemed to catch it. From the sea-bottom, miles beneath, they slowly lifted something hour after hour, and at last drew it on deck. In the dark-

ness they crept up to feel it. It was the cable! Strong men wept and then cheered. Even so it was suspected that there was another break, and they had only a fragment; but, soon, in answer to a test, came a spark, and then a message from the distant American shore. What seemed impossible had happened: they had in that limitless sea found what seemed irretrievably hidden. In some such fashion the scientific man to-day, it seems to me, is groping for demonstration of the future life. It is important for this reason: just as those sailors knew that the cable was somewhere in the ocean, so the scientist has in his inner consciousness a conviction — of which he is, in waking hours, scarcely aware — that in the black depths of what we call death there is life. That such men, so clear-headed, so cautious, so honest, investigate these strange phenomena, is sublime witness to the persistent instinct of the race, reaching out in hope for immortality.

Once more, let me say, I do not put this down as an argument. I wish merely to affirm again that there is in

humanity an undiminished instinct which reaches out with hope, with expectation, towards life beyond life.¹

¹ Perhaps a few sentences from Dr. Osler ("Science and Immortality," p. 19) ought, in fairness, to be set down. "I have," he says, "careful records of about five hundred death-beds, studied particularly with reference to the modes of death and the sensations of the dying. The great majority give no sign one way or the other; like their birth their death was a sleep and a forgetting." It seems to a clergyman, who probably sees as much of death-beds as a doctor, somewhat strange that such observation should be used as an argument. Many dying people, before lapsing into unconsciousness, still expect to live in the ordinary sense: they do not know that they are dying. Most people are so ill that they are not capable of thought about anything. Visits upon old people, who, apparently well, are living with the expectation of death, reveal better the thoughts men have as they consciously approach death: these people are visited more often by the clergyman than by the physician. Personally, I may say that it is not my custom to talk much with these people about the future life; but, when invited, and often by my own suggestion, I read fragrant promises of the Bible, or say some old collect of hope and peace; and as I look into the wrinkled face, I know that the meaning is clear. The deepest and best things are not said, on either side; but they are most surely understood. Both medicine and psychology need to learn that there are some experiences and hopes and fears too profound to be told to anyone. Only to the friend willing to interpret the appeal shining in the eyes can they be known. Nor is the clergyman's experience confined to the so-called religious folk: in a parish where there are many poor, "Send for the minister," is apt to be as prompt a request as "Send for the doctor," — it comes not from the sick man, but from one who loves him, and who thinks prayer may perhaps help as much as medicine.

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION

TO a man who believes in the Christian revelation of God's character, no word about immortality is valid which does not include the thought of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is one of the incomprehensible facts of the science of, let us say, the last fifty years, that it counted out the knowledge which Jesus Christ brought to men of the character of God. Of course the excuse is that during that period the documents of Christianity were undergoing an almost rabid examination, and the man who was interested in science felt the field too large and vague to be brought within the range of what might be called scientific history. The amazing fact still remains that the scientific man was content to ignore this field which seemed at least to offer a necessary contribution to the

problems which he was trying to solve. He was apt to say that science neither accepted nor rejected immortality, — he awaited the evidence: meantime, he paid small heed to the one source of information which promised the largest return. The attitude of many scientific leaders toward Christian facts was, to say the least, *blasé*.

Perceptibly this attitude has changed. It is no pretty figure of speech to talk of scientific history. The scientific person now regards not only what he can take in with his senses; he regards also the record of the past so far as that record seems to his honest mind to have ample witness. It may be said that this is to enlarge the definition of science. Even granting this, it is great gain to have the scientific temper take respectful note of what was formerly thought too indistinct for any recognition whatever.

The very fact that Christian documents have been ruthlessly questioned tends to give them to-day a position which they have never held before. They are being admitted to accurate history in a time

when history is sharply scrutinised. The tendency is not yet completed. Scientific men still are cautious. But we may say without fear of contradiction that learned men will not continue to weigh thoughts of immortality without measuring the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I

First of all, we must lay firm hold of the fact that Jesus Christ, having died as all men die, reappeared alive. Here is a fact of which science must take cognisance. At least one man, we say, has given us proof of his immortality. This is not a theory, not a hope, but a well-attested fact.

Instantly the man who is suspicious of religious credulity asks what the evidence is. The ground to be covered in giving answer is fortunately familiar, whether we grant its validity or not. Still it is wise to go over it to assure ourselves how varied and convincing is the evidence; for the evidence comes not only

from documents, but from institutions of continuous life surviving to our own day.

The first documents to be weighed are St. Paul's New Testament Epistles. Criticism has beaten mercilessly upon these, and there are to-day what scholars call the "generally accepted epistles of St. Paul." Some scholars would enlarge the list, others reduce it; pious additions to the text may be granted here or there. But from these documents the character of St. Paul is clear,—no dispute over texts or over the "later hand" can befog it. Besides, there are pages, not to speak of whole epistles, which we can be sure were written by this vigorously evident personality, named Paul, before, let us say, the year of our Lord 58. In other words, we know the witness and we know some of the things about which he bore witness. And all this we know without departing from rigid canons of what for convenience we may call scientific history.

What sort of witness, then, is this man Paul? Unimpeachable words from his

own pen let us into this important secret. He was naturally high-strung, proud. He was a gentleman, with all the straightforward simplicity and accuracy of a gentleman. He was thoroughly educated,¹ though for the narrow purposes of a strict Pharisee. He was a zealous pupil of a famous master who rejected the claims of Jesus of Nazareth; the pupil went so far as to persecute the new sect of the Nazarene. Then there was a crisis, — a crisis which turned the man's life upside down: Him whose disciples he had

¹ Dr. George A. Gordon, preaching the Baccalaureate sermon to the Harvard Class of 1907, cited St. Paul as a type of a truly educated man. The candour of the preacher and the incidental character of this illustration give especial value to his words: —

“When Paul says, ‘Of the Jews received I five times forty stripes save one,’ he gives assurance in that simple phrase ‘save one’ that he is an educated man, that he is a person of intellectual integrity, that he is a writer with a high ideal of truth. Indeed, I have been tempted to conclude, from my knowledge of men, that Paul’s ability to qualify a statement meant for the emotions, so as to bring it into absolute accord with fact, is one of the best witnesses to his intellectual honour. How great a discovery that is in an important writer, in an important and passionate speaker, I need not say, or how great a quality this intellectual honour is in any man.”

The whole passage (2 Cor. xi) from which this verse (24) is taken is filled with instances of St. Paul’s accuracy in the rush of eloquence and appeal.

persecuted he acknowledged as Lord. Such a man does not change masters easily. No subjective process, no dream, no sudden emotion, no mere liking, can possibly explain the turning from Gamaliel to Jesus. So we say in general. And we find that this particular man was stirred to the depths. He left no stone unturned. He told his Galatian friends that he first fled to Arabia — he faced the problem alone with God. Then he conferred with the chief man of the Church, the Apostle Peter. He told his Corinthian parishioners how scrupulously he investigated facts. We begin to see what it cost this proud Saul of Tarsus to say that he had made a serious intellectual mistake. He went to man after man for evidence to confirm what was made clear to him in the Damascus revelation. The full light of all kinds of testimony was necessary for so fearless and sincere a soul.

Now, one of the main facts which this man Paul proclaimed was that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. “Christ rose again the third day,” he said, “and was

seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present. . . . Then he appeared to James; then to all the Apostles.”¹ These words were written within a generation of the time when the event recorded took place. At least two hundred and fifty witnesses still lived: the very reference to them invited the doubter to verify St. Paul’s assertion. For all reasons we feel that we have the best possible testimony from St. Paul for an unparalleled event. With acute mind he departed from an old intellectual position: we find due evidence of the painstaking care to sift facts which his known character would lead us to expect. We find him facing danger, persecution, toil, death, because his hold on this particular fact of the resurrection of Christ was tenacious and convinced.

One possible exception to such complete testimony has often been suggested. It is the fact that to the list of witnesses St. Paul appended his own name: “And

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 4-7.

last of all, as unto one born out of due time, he appeared to me also.”¹ Ah, says the critic, then all this evidence is on the level of subjective hallucination. This however, is smart and shallow comment. For if anything is plain it is that St. Paul regarded the revelation on the road to Damascus as objective. He saw Christ, he heard Christ speak. It was no dream, it was no vision conjured up out of his inner consciousness. We may have decided opinions what this “heavenly vision” was, or was not; but we can have no possible doubt what St. Paul believed it to be. He had seen Christ, as really as St. Peter had seen Him in the days of the Galilean ministry. The testimony of St. Paul to the objective resurrection of Jesus Christ is even to this last detail as nearly perfect as any testimony of a past event can be made. The fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians is a document bearing witness to a unique event to which scientific history must yield the utmost respect.

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 8.

There are later documents which survive to bear excellent testimony to our Saviour's resurrection. This one from St. Paul must suffice. Let us turn then at once to the evidence which institutions bear to the event. The institutions which stand out with perpetual force as witnesses of the resurrection are Sunday and the Christian Church; the latter especially as embodied in the Sacraments and the historic ministry.

Sunday is a day altogether new in the world. The Jewish Sabbath cannot explain it; no heathen day can explain it. For all the years, the Lord's Day, which we call Sunday, is explained by one fact alone: some stupendous event must have happened on this day to warrant its being kept with such quick universality. History, by groping and searching, can find but one event suited to its demands, — the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Then there is the Christian Church. It has had a constantly increasing life for nearly two thousand years. Moreover, it is a definite organisation. It has

a regular rite for admission to membership which has been observed from the start. It has an authorised statement of belief which sends its roots down to apostolic times. It has a chief service which is the essence of endless remembrance. It has a regular, uninterrupted line of officers. It is necessary to see the marvel in this continuous life of a single organisation: it is certainly without parallel in history. The glory of Greece, the glory of Rome, are as a gentle river compared with this onward rushing sea. Sound history can find no other reason for this Christian Church but the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

All attempts to show the Church founded on anything but a fact are doomed to failure. No amount of meditation, no weeks and months of blessed association with the earthly Jesus, could have inspired the apostles, forlorn and despairing after the death of Jesus, to start the Christian Church upon its course. No myth, no stroke of subjective genius, can explain one week of apostolic history. A well-attested objec-

tive fact alone suffices, — the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

There was an apostate bishop in France to whom an extravagant young man once came for advice. The young man knew that the apostate bishop was sceptical and uncertain about many details of the faith; so he asked the bishop to tell him how he could found a new religion, — for it seemed to him that Christianity should be superseded, as a thing outworn. The old bishop turned to him and said: “Yes, I can tell you how to found a new religion. There is just one way: you must lead a sinless life; you must be crucified; and the third day you must rise from the dead. Then perhaps you can found a religion which can compete with Christianity.” The old bishop had deserted Christianity, but he knew the stubbornness of facts. A Christian Church surrounding the globe is a fact that no man can deny. It must be explained. Only facts can explain facts. And the only fact that men have ever suggested for the existence of the Christian Church is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Documents and institutions, therefore, combine their evidence to place Christ's resurrection among the best attested facts of history. There are undoubted difficulties in the Gospel narratives which describe the glorified body of the risen Jesus. The eating, the flesh, the bones, the entering closed doors, all raise questions which no one has yet been able to answer. But these difficulties cannot blind us to the objective fact of His resurrection. It was the objective demonstration of individual immortality which founded the Church.

II

Very well, then: grant as we must that Christ demonstrated past all doubt His own immortality, what does this demonstration contribute toward the general problem of immortality? There is the clearest evidence from St. Paul's epistles that to the early Church Christ's resurrection was the guarantee of our resurrection. In the resurrection of Jesus the long reign of death was brought to an

end. As God awakened Christ, so would God awaken all men. St. Paul went so far in his eager argument as to say that if we were not to rise, then Christ was not risen.

But here we are forced to notice that St. Paul has passed from the region of a chronicler to the realm of a theologian. The connection between Christ's resurrection and our resurrection is not a direct connection. It is not because any man rose from the dead that our resurrection is assured: it is only because the Risen One is Christ Himself.

We reach the clue to the whole problem most quickly if we turn to the Fourth Gospel. This is not the place to pause for an exhaustive discussion of the authorship and purpose of the Fourth Gospel. But, in passing, one may say that the recent tendency so to magnify the importance of the matter-of-fact St. Mark that the mystical Fourth Gospel is counted less than history, is not soundly critical. One has only to think how the plain St. Mark would have described a many-sided person, in whom there was a rich

mystical strain, to see how the practical author would have passed over the moments least intelligible to his practical nature. I am sure that scholars will talk more and more of the historical value of the portrait which St. John gives us, less and less exclusively of the quasi-photograph which is the valuable, though limited, art of St. Mark.

All this is but the hurried assurance that when we read in the Fourth Gospel that Jesus said to His disciples, "Because I live, ye shall live also,"¹ we may be confident that Jesus gave His friends just such a comforting promise. It is an interesting exegesis which makes the promises of the Fourth Gospel promises for this life, and there is unquestionably an element of profound truth in such an exegesis. The error begins when the promises are limited to this life. "The more abundant life," "the many mansions," all begin here, — but the quality of the life and the opportunities for its exercise are so abounding that no candid exegesis can do anything else than apply

¹ St. John xiv. 19.

it to the world to come. "If the minister," says Ian Maclaren,¹ "ask the sick what Scripture they desire, it is only a form, for there is one chapter which every man and woman want to hear in great sorrow, or when the shadow is falling. The leaf which contains the fourteenth of St. John's Gospel should be made movable in our Bibles, in order that it might be replaced every ten years. By the time a man has got to middle age that leaf is thinning, and by old age it is only a brown film that is barely legible, and must be gently handled. Yet with every reading — say six times a week — the pastor notices that it yields some new revelation of the Divine Love and the Kingdom of Heaven. If one is sinking into unconsciousness, and you read, 'In my Father's house are many mansions,' he will come back and whisper 'mansions,' and he will wait till you finish, 'where I am ye may be also,' before he dies in peace." These eloquent words from a good pastor tell better than any argument where the Christian consciousness puts the emphasis.

¹ "The Cure of Souls," pp. 233 f.

It is then because Christ is Christ that His proved immortality has any meaning towards assuring us of our immortality. Because death was conquered in the person of one individual, we should not therefore feel that we could conquer death; any more than we should believe it our destiny to write a play as good as Hamlet because an individual man had once accomplished the feat. Christ having lived the life of an individual man is more than an individual man. He is to faith — He is, more and more, to accurate reason — “the synonym of God in history.” It is because in the simple and loving Jesus of Nazareth we see the character of the most high God, — it is for that supreme reason that we find for ourselves a meaning in His resurrection. His resurrection lies in the region of scientific history. Our resurrection lies in the region of faith. Our resurrection may be assured to faith; it is not assured in the same category as that in which the resurrection of Christ is assured. So far as we yet know, strictly speaking, our resurrection is not demonstrated.

This is not to forget that, to the mind of so great a man as St. Paul, Christ's resurrection was the pledge of our resurrection. He was fond of speaking of the *power* of His resurrection. He saw this power manifested, and capable of being manifested, in many directions. But the one phase of that power which we now need to remember is only that He who promised life and immortality in God's Name sealed His right and authority to make such a pledge, by Himself rising from the dead. We may reasonably trust the promise of One who showed in Himself such Power.

Another valuable aspect of Christ's resurrection appears when we contemplate Christ from the manward side: not only do we see in Him the individual Man meeting human conditions in a human way, but we see in Him the head of the race. He has from without brought into the race what the race did not before possess, and this possession, incorporated into His life, becomes, by His generosity, the possession of all humanity. To use His own figure, the

leaven is put into the meal,—ultimately the whole will be leavened. The power which raised Him from the dead will also raise us. The dominion of death is forever broken.

All this reflection is beautiful and valid — on one condition. That condition is that it be frankly put in the region of faith. It is not, in the scientific sense, knowledge. At Christmas time the children of the household gather near the door that leads to the room where the festival tree is being adorned. They grow impatient. They wonder if, after all, they are going to have all the joys that came with former Christmases; and, as children will, they grow despondent. Suddenly the door is opened, and quickly it is closed again. It is open but a moment; they have but one look. Still it is enough: all their best anticipations are in that flash verified. What dazzling splendour! What an array of childish delights! They now feel sure. They are content to wait. Strictly speaking, they do not know that they shall enter that room. But they have a definite

trust that it is meant for them, and that they shall enter at last. It is in some such way, I think, that mankind saw into the beautiful country of Immortality when the Saviour came back through the door of death. One Man is immortal. We believe Him when He promises to us a share in His immortality.

And yet — let us be frank — it is not knowledge. It is faith.

CHAPTER IV

THE POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTION OF PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

THERE can be no discussion of Immortality to-day without asking what possible contribution may be expected from Psychical Research. It is in such investigation that science *might* discover objective demonstration of immortality. In general no one but a trained scientific person, with cultivated habits of observation, has any right to pass judgment upon the results of such psychical phenomena as are revealed through so-called "mediums." Until a considerable number of scientific scholars have admitted the revelations of mediums to be in any instance indubitably from the spirit world, we, as laymen, have no right to say that there is yet objective evidence of immortality. Even granting this, however, there are certain phases

of Psychical Research which we may all meditate upon.

I have already referred to the first contribution which Psychical Research has made. Modern science, in its most dignified and conservative forms, is willing to investigate evidence of life after death. That alone, whether mediums are proved all false, or whether one here and there be proved a valid medium, is a significant fact. It shows that they who study only facts as their senses touch them, who exclude almost savagely any theory or speculation, — such students are now awaiting proof to their senses of immortality. The mere fact that they are willing to expect it is a long step towards including immortality among scientific facts. It is, to say the least, becoming an hypothesis of science, almost in the sense that the doctrine of evolution is an hypothesis of science. Enough facts, according to the sense-reports of one or two careful students, are pointing in the direction of immortality, to have it reckoned among working scientific theories. For one who stands outside the charmed

circle of scientific investigators it seems an impressive moment.

Another, and more immediate, contribution which Psychological Research has made is that it has unmasked the countless impostors who, under the name of mediums, prey upon the careless observation of the worried and sorrowful people who come to them. To expose the fraudulent practices of the ordinary medium has been worth all the pains to which the Society for Psychological Research has put itself. It becomes more and more evident that the average person, however keen-witted, is an untrustworthy observer. Besides this lack of observation, the darkness or dim light of most of the rooms where mediums receive their clients makes observation almost impossible. Men like Professor Hyslop¹ have trained themselves to be accurate observers; even so the tricks are difficult to discover. The materialising séance is a skilful play with lights to create an illusion or hallucination; or a servant of the medium boldly dons a wig and in the

¹ "Borderland of Psychological Research," pp. 219 ff.

dim light plays the rôle of a sitter's departed uncle. Rope-tying has long ago been explained as a trick of the juggler; and whether some rappings may be proved valid or not, others have confessedly been produced by the subtle cracking of joints in the knees and toes. Slate-writing is always fraudulent, however the messages placed upon the slates may be derived. Messages shown on slates are sometimes so wonderful that open-minded observers, though believing slate-writing always a trick, are inclined to believe that a person with mediumistic power uses this fraudulent device to give the sitter all possible helps toward faith. Even Professor Hyslop says distinctly that it is *possible* to "suppose that the medium has obtained the information supernormally, and fraudulently put it on the slate."¹ Notwithstanding this possibility every medium who uses physical machinery appeals to the trained observer more and more as a fraud. Mrs. Piper, who, as Professor James used to say,² is the one white crow to prove that

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 212.

² "The Will to Believe," p. 319.

not all crows are black, goes into her trances in broad daylight, and uses nothing but a pad of paper and a pencil which she holds in her hand in the ordinary way.

Quite apart, however, from fraudulent means of demonstrating mediumship, there comes the thought that the information itself may be fraudulently obtained. Most people who go to mediums go when they are distracted. They talk somewhat wildly, and the calm medium, sitting by, collects from their conversation bits of information. Nicknames of dear ones may be dropped unconsciously. The medium, withdrawing to her secret room, writes a note signed by this nickname, puts it on a slate covered with a magic flap; in a few moments the slate is opened, and there lies a note signed by the nickname — and how *could* the medium ever know! A spirit, decides the victim, has written the note.

But there is a possibility of fraud even subtler still. We who have read of Sherlock Holmes know how far it is possible for a sharp observer to deduce facts of family and relationship from hair and

face and clothing. The story is told of the late Bishop Wilberforce that once when he was giving a garden party to his clergy his chaplain came to him and told him that he must be sure to speak to a certain old clergyman who was feeling neglected. The Bishop, looking at him, could not recall ever having seen him before. Nevertheless he went up and spoke to him. After a few conventional words the Bishop said, "Well, I see you still ride your old grey mare." "Yes, yes," said the old man, delighted, "it's good of you to remember how fond I am of riding." Afterwards, the chaplain, who had heard the conversation, said to the Bishop, "Ah, so you did know him after all?" "No," said the Bishop, "I didn't know him from Adam, — but I saw a few short grey hairs on his coat, — and, — and, — well, I *chanced* the sex!" One wonders if Bishop Wilberforce would not have made a supremely successful medium had he turned his talents in that direction.

So much, then, for mediums who wilfully deceive the widow and the stranger.

May there not be mediums who are themselves deceived? We are on treacherous ground. We who are on the outside of such investigation have no ability to weigh evidence: we can but tell what *seems* to be the testimony of candid scientific men, — for there is not yet agreement among the experts and we may hope to get only general notions of what the outcome may be. So far as I can see, even the scientific “sitter” thinks it only fair to the medium that he put himself in a fairly receptive and responsive frame of mind. Now, though the medium may indulge in deceptive secondary means like pellets and slate-writing, let us assume that the medium feels that a message is really coming from the unseen world; that is, however the message may be tricked out, the medium has a conviction that the message itself is genuine. The medium, in other words, if not a valid medium, is self-deceived. The fact that the medium is able to give answers to questions which astonish the sitter by their accuracy must have an effect upon the medium: the medium must feel

strangely imbued with supernormal power. It would not be odd if the medium, having answered questions skilfully, should imagine that a spirit had given the answers. For the moment, at any rate, it is legitimate to suppose that no spirit has spoken to the medium, or through the medium; is there, in such a case, any way to explain how the medium answered the questions?

It has seemed to most psychologists that even so an explanation is possible. As they have studied the phenomena, *some* phenomena have "been reduced in rank, and messages purporting to come from an unknown world of spirits have been lowered to the level of interesting cases of thought-reading, or mere pranks of the 'subliminal mind.'"¹ If you read the reports of those who have consulted mediums you generally (not always) find that the most astonishing revelations are secrets known only to the sitter. It is conceivable that as the sitter is being investigated by the medium, the

¹"Signs of Divine Guidance," Miss C. E. Stevens, *Hibbert Journal*, July, 1906, pp. 861 f.

subconscious self of the medium is gathering news from the subconscious self of the sitter; that therefore when the sitter asks the medium questions, the medium draws from the fund of subconscious information all that is necessary for a correct and amazing answer. This is a mystery and a power not a bit easier to explain than the receiving of news from a disembodied spirit. Because it is so difficult, the scientific man, says Professor Hyslop, "rightly feels that it is better to confess ignorance than to exhibit so much credulity as to accept or assert so large a capacity as is involved in the assumption of such systematic and occult access to living memories. It only makes the phenomena more mysterious, instead of more clearly intelligible."¹ All this may be cheerfully granted; yet, in the present state of our information, it does not prevent our believing that the mind-reading theory, the intercourse between subconscious selves, is the real explanation of much, at least, of what ap-

¹ "The Mystery of Mrs. Piper," Sunday Magazine, Jan. 13, 1907, p. 12.

pears to sincere mediums, if there be such, to be revelations from an unseen world. This may be put down as an hypothetical explanation. But it is an explanation which we had better bear in mind. It gives us rational cause for thinking that some excellent and honest persons who believe themselves mediums *may* be self-deceived.

We come now to the most interesting consideration of the reasons which have induced a few careful investigators to believe that some credence must be given to certain messages which appear to come from the spirit-world. In his book on *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, the late Frederic W. H. Myers speaks of his subject as a "vast and inchoate inquiry."¹ It is not surprising that even he, with his sturdy conviction, is perplexed by the amount of evidential material which he puts before us in his closely printed volumes. Besides such evidence as scientific men have collected, there is an unlimited range of evidence from persons who do not wish

¹ Vol. ii. p. 81.

publicity in any form, and who believe that scientific investigation can go on without their testimony. For it must be remembered that science can take account only of that which is cautiously examined and most scrupulously chronicled at the time, with ample witnesses to secure accuracy. Still, even the scientific man cannot forget that his well-attested material is only a fraction of the evidence which might have been gathered, had people been disposed to allow their powers to be examined.

The most famous of modern mediums, and, I believe, the only medium who has been thoroughly tested through a space of many years, both in this country and in Europe, is Mrs. Piper of Boston. She discovered her power almost by accident; scientific men like Professor William James, Mr. Frederic W. H. Myers, Dr. Richard Hodgson, and Sir Oliver Lodge, have been putting her to every test. She and her husband have been shadowed by detectives to make sure that no information comes to Mrs. Piper in ordinary ways. We are then sure, on scientific testimony, that Mrs. Piper, as

a medium, gives startling evidence of knowledge which is indubitably supernormal. So far all careful observers agree. To one or two it seems certain that Mrs. Piper receives her information from persons who have passed to the other world. To others, who have studied Mrs. Piper and her trances with all possible sympathy, it does not seem certain that her wonderful information comes from any world beyond this. To the late Frederic W. H. Myers, these phenomena proved (1) the survival of the spirit after death, (2) an avenue of communication between the world of the dead and the world of the living, (3) the retention on the part of the dead of the memories and loves of earth.¹ To give assent to such conclusions we of the laity would have to receive the verdict of a very considerable number of scientific men. Personally, I should desire the assent of such a scholar as Professor William James. And Mr. James never gave his assent. In a letter ² which he graciously allowed me to

¹ *Op. cit.*, vol. ii. pp. 256 f.

² The letter bears the date of April 21, 1907.

quote, he gave his verdict. "My state of mind," he said, "is this: Mrs. Piper has supernormal knowledge in her trances: but whether it comes from 'tapping the minds' of living people, or from some common cosmic reservoir of memories, or from surviving 'spirits' of the departed, is a question impossible for *me* to answer just now to my own satisfaction. The spirit-theory is undoubtedly not only the most natural, but the simplest, and I have great respect for Hodgson's and Hyslop's arguments when they adopt it. At the same time the electric current called *belief* has not yet closed in my mind. Whatever the explanation be, trance-mediumship is an excessively *complex* phenomenon, in which many concurrent factors are engaged. That is why interpretation is so hard." If a witness so clear, so frank, so open to conviction as Professor James, does not give his assent, the thoughtful layman in such subjects wisely withholds his decision, — and also continues to maintain an open mind toward the elusive phenomena.

When one counsels an open mind to-

ward such experiences one needs to guard against inviting any troubled John or Johanna to consult mediums, either for assurance or for the renewing of friendships. Curiosity, anxiety, grief, would wisely seek another way to peace. But for the scientific explorer, mediums are legitimate objects of study. The very fact that many people who clearly have some sort of supernormal power deliberately refuse to exercise it suggests how little happiness is in store for us in that direction, — so far as we can now see. Absorbingly interesting phenomena may be revealed; but the trained observer will bring the news of them to us, and he alone is fitted to judge their validity. We who are amateurs at best would wisely remember that we must here sit at the feet of the scientific folk, and receive our lesson when the teachers are ready to teach it.

On the other hand, keeping an open mind means readiness to hear such trained and respected observers when they do speak. Nothing is so cheap as sniffing at what seems to us on *a priori*

grounds unreasonable. Such an attitude puts us in the class of people who laughed at Columbus and at the rest of the immortal company who have opened new windows for humanity. Wireless telegraphy and journeys through the air are not the end of the wonders.

The scoffer is apt to fix upon two details in all the most respectable of the reports which are said to come from the other world. One is that when a "spirit" tries to identify himself, he fixes upon only the most trivial of the earth experiences which he has shared with the "sitter." Now I believe that frequent experiments have demonstrated that when two college men in different rooms are connected by telegraph, and one, a friend, though now unknown to the other, attempts to make his identity plain without giving a name, the common experiences recalled are invariably ridiculously trivial. That experiment certainly throws some light upon the trivial attempts of the possible spirits. Again, it is urged, the spirit never seems to tell the sitter anything that conveys to him any picture

of the outward life in which the spirit is placed. This, it seems to me, may be a mark that the spirit is a spirit indeed; for I hope to show, on other grounds, that there is ample reason to believe that there are no terms in which the life which the spirits live can be described to us in our present limitations. From a man who lay for seven days hovering between life and death, there has recently come the following genuine record of experience: "So I lay upon the edge of death, looking out. . . . It lay just there — that Great Beyond, and I saw it as one sees the earth at sunrise from the window of a tower; yet how it was is difficult to tell, for things outside of this world are outside of this world's speech; yet I knew that it was infinite, eternal, and I was part of it. . . . Then I, to whom trust was difficult and reason always insistent, I trusted — trusted even the pain of the one who, loving, must live without." ¹

Thus, at best, so far as a layman may see, all that Psychical Research can do

¹ Hibbert Journal, April, 1907, p. 555.

is to assure us that our Christian faith has objective demonstration, so far as the bare fact of immortality is concerned. It can tell us that science is as sure as religion that the soul survives death. What the new life is, faith will always be able to tell better than science. We must speak with modest caution, but it seems fairly certain that the communications between the world of the living and the world where men live again are not to be developed far beyond their present stage — if these communications should be proved authentic.

The one real boon which a positive outcome to the study of psychical phenomena might have for men is that to those who do not now believe that there is to be a world to come, the objective, scientific assurance might be the spark which should touch into flame the instinctive faith in God which is hid in all human nature. To believe in a bare life to come, unlighted by any trust in a loving God, is not of itself a permanent joy. It may quicken one to richer life in the first flush of discovery; but God

must be remembered as the Lord of that life to make it ultimately desirable. Science with all its convincing powers can never usurp the throne of the mystic.¹

¹ In his presidential address before the British Association in September, 1913, Sir Oliver Lodge gave this testimony: "Although I am speaking *ex cathedra*, as one of the representatives of orthodox science, I will not shrink from a personal note summarising the result on my own mind of thirty years' experience of psychical research, begun without predilection — indeed, with the usual hostile prejudice. . . . In justice to myself and my co-workers I must risk annoying my present hearers not only by leaving on record our conviction that occurrences now regarded as occult can be examined and reduced to order by the methods of science carefully and persistently applied, but by going further and saying, with the utmost brevity, that already the facts so examined have convinced me that memory and affection are not limited to that association with matter by which alone they can manifest themselves here and now, and that personality persists beyond bodily death. The evidence to my mind goes to prove that discarnate intelligence, under certain conditions, may interact with us on the material side, thus indirectly coming within our scientific ken; and that gradually we may hope to attain some understanding of the nature of a larger, perhaps ethereal, existence, and of the conditions regulating intercourse across the chasm. A body of responsible investigators has even now landed on the treacherous but promising shores of a new continent." It is right to give respectful attention to a scientific authority so eminent as Sir Oliver Lodge; but it is equally right to limit the research to "responsible investigators" and to refrain from a like acceptance until they are fully ready to report,

CHAPTER V

FAITH IN IMMORTALITY BETTER THAN KNOWLEDGE OF IT

JESUS CHRIST demonstrated once for all the character of God. As Jesus Christ once helped, forgave, loved, so the Father in Heaven helps, forgives, loves. As Jesus Christ was understood by His early followers to promise immortality, so Christian men all down the ages have trusted in immortality upon His word. Christian men do not know that they shall live again in the sense that they know that if they plant an acorn there will come up an oak. They *believe* that they shall live again, because they believe in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What would it be to *know* that there is such a fact as human immortality? It would be such reports from vanished souls as the Society for Psychical Research might decide to be valid and

authentic. If we could have from many people who are, as we say, dead, the convincing assurance that they live, then we should have what we might reasonably call knowledge of immortality. For the chief distinction between what we know and what we do not know — according to our ordinary language — is that we know what happens periodically or repeatedly; if an experience is unique, we doubt the witness's veracity or his power of observation. Certain phenomena of electricity are as far beyond our understanding as the raising of Lazarus; but because the phenomena are common occurrences we say that we know them. I have no quarrel with this use of language, arbitrary as it is. I call attention to it merely to show that in order to bring immortality within the realm of what we call knowledge, we must get many undoubted communications from a life beyond this life.

People sometimes say that they wish that the proof of immortality could be made so concrete, so materialistic, that even the most sceptical soul would be

compelled to trust the fact. People sometimes dare to criticise the ways of God, because, though He has put us in a world where happiness and sorrow mingle, and where the sadness often seems impenetrable, He has not demonstrated to us exactly what the compensations of the future life will be. We long to hear the voice, to see the face, to feel the hand. However faint the voice, however dim the face, however slight the touch upon the hand, such revelation of reality would be knowledge. Instead, God gives us faith. He tells us, through Christ, to *believe* that His promises fulfilled will be better than anything that we can desire or pray for.

I

So we come to the very centre of religion. Better than all material confirmation of immortality is the implicit trust in God. By a great, authoritative act, God has revealed to us His bidding that we believe in immortality. He asks us to trust Him. Immortality is one of

the ineradicable desires of the human spirit. God asks us to trust him for that. Better than all wisdom, better than all knowledge, is this high trust in God for all that is most precious and intimate.

Nothing illustrates our relation to God so completely as a child's relation to his earthly father. Our Saviour intimated it when He said, "Except ye become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." Let us, for the sake of ultimate clearness, imagine a case which, if not impossible, is altogether unnatural, unchildlike, — let us imagine a child who should say to his father: "Father, I know that I am to inherit what you have earned and saved, but I feel uncertain about the time when I shall have grown to be a man. Will you, therefore, show to me all your securities and investments, that I may satisfy myself of your ability and integrity." Compare such an imaginary and impossible child with the ordinary, normal child. It is childlike to trust. The childlike child believes in his father so implicitly

that he would never think of asking a proof of his father's loyal protection and love. He is so sure that his father will do all that is best for him, that he never thinks of putting a single question. When the years of childhood are past, the doubts and suspicions may easily arise. But they are foreign to childhood as such. You may point to cases where the father was not a good father, squandering his children's inheritance, and leaving at last a tarnished name. But even with the impossible admission that a child's suspicious questioning could have averted the disaster, even then, who would be so base as to prefer a patrimony in mature life to a childhood full of trust for a dear father! And when we look upon the ordinary case where a father has, with industry and love, done the best he could, toiled and saved for the good of his child, what an unnatural blackness falls over the spirit as one thinks of a child who would ask of his devoted father a proof of his care. It is a thought full of pain and horror.

Now think of our perfect Father in

Heaven. It is impressive to hear an agnostic saying words like these: "I am no optimist, but I have the firmest belief that the Divine Government (if we may use such a phrase to express the sum of the 'customs of matter') is wholly just. . . . In short, as we live we are paid for living. . . . The absolute justice of the system of things is as clear to me as any scientific fact."¹ That is the cold testimony of a naturalist. No love can be lasting which does not find in the object of its love an exact justice. The Christian man must add to this testimony of the naturalist the testimony of Jesus Christ. Christ demonstrated the Father to have the tender qualities of the human father, only carried to their complete perfection, and held in perfect poise with justice. As God's love is suggested to us in ten thousand ways, it is made certain to us in the sending of His Son. So, as we grasp the reality of His character, we yield Him trust for trust, love for love. "We love Him because He first loved us," and because we have found it out.

¹ T. H. Huxley, "Life and Letters," vol. i. p. 236.

With such a heavenly Father, however dimly understood, we begin to feel how much better it is to trust Him than to have any outward proof of that future which He is keeping for us and ours. It is because a child trusts his earthly father for food, lodging, teaching, love — everything — that the child deepens his love for his father. It is because we must trust God for all greatest things, including immortality, that our love goes out to Him rich and deep. We grow day by day to depend more and more upon Him. With every new cause for depending upon Him, because of the natural darkness of the way, we draw nearer to Him. Less and less, as the profounder experiences touch us, do we care to have proofs and demonstrations. Better than all else is the sense that we trust Him, rely upon Him, care that He cares for us. Straightway we give a love so thorough that we dare to shut our eyes and ask Him to lead us on. In the light of such perfect trust, immortality becomes a bauble. It was no rhetoric, but the finest possible expression of a divine

companionship, which made Job cry, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him": the joy of that trust was better than life. It was also a rational if somewhat severe joy which made the old New England theologian say that he was willing to be damned for the glory of God: the same clear insight into the supreme gladness of trusting God was there.

II

We are now ready to gather up some of the threads and to ask why we should be especially willing to trust God for immortality. I have tried to show how continuously, how universally, there has been locked in the human instincts the hope of immortality. It becomes a vital question to ask how God treats these hopes which He has planted in the human breast.

We must be on our guard against limiting the time, when we judge the range and outcome of any hope. Many a man having prayed for the recovery of a friend from some dangerous illness, having

found in his heart ground of hope, and having only grief and mourning at last, has said that hopes are God's way of mocking us; so he thinks bitterly of God, and threatens to give up trusting in Him. But such a judgment on hope is altogether inadequate. To judge the answer to the hope that fluttered in the anxious heart that day, one would need to look forward into the years, to see what came thereafter to the vanishing life and to the lives of those who loved the vanishing life. Sometimes years on earth may reveal somewhat of the fulfilment of the hope, so that men may murmur, "We see now that it was for the best." More often perhaps we must wait for the eternal years to declare the real fulfilment. In any case we can set off no narrow bounds and say that the judgment is set. We may wisely speak in somewhat general terms of the way in which God treats the hopes of humanity.

When people discovered the so-called electric current, and dreamed of the power and accomplishment hid within it, who imagined the marvels of this year

of grace? No one, I am sure, dared to dream of anything so wonderful as what has really come to pass. When the Egyptian gazed up into the sky and prated of what went on above the stars, not one, though he thought himself wild with speculation, imagined even the merest fraction of what the telescope is to-day revealing to the modern astronomer, — worlds beyond worlds, systems beyond systems, each with its flaming central sun. Men hoped to find a passage to India, and found a new world. America bought a frozen and barren Alaska, hoping in time to recover the seven millions of dollars paid for it; now it is discovered to be a land of gold. Everywhere we look, even in common matters, we find the world daring to hope boldly, and always being amazed in the end with the fulfilment. Much disappointment, seeming failure, and bitterness, strew the way, but the great outcome seems inevitable. The God who gives men hope gives men also unguessed rewards for hoping.

The great hope of all the world was

when God inspired men to think of the coming of Christ. Men in Israel, and perhaps in other nations, began to be aware of a still and radiant voice out of the vast unknown telling them that a deliverer should come. The voice proclaimed that God cared for poor, wandering, stumbling, falling mankind. Some way a man here and there received the impression that God Himself, Maker and Ruler of All, would touch the very earth which He had made. His Christ would show the world the love God bore to the world. A genius here and there caught the accents of the Divine Voice from the depths of light, and thrilled all who heard his witness. The hope grew, changed, passed to finer phases. As men suffered, the hope became holier and happier. At last after generations had gone to their graves, with the hope still unfulfilled, Christ was born in Bethlehem. Generations of Jewish maidens had led lives of brilliant goodness, hoping that to them might come the unspeakable honour of being the mother of the Messiah. At last, Mary, beautiful and

poor and good, knew that her child was the chosen of God. At last a few shepherds — representatives for all time of a busy and longing humanity — went to Bethlehem to see the Answer of God to all the hopes which He had kindled in human hearts. These shepherds no doubt looked down upon the humble scene, with the vague hope that in a few years this Baby, grown a man, would lead the armies of Israel to the conquest of a world empire, which should make the Roman Empire a bit of tinsel in comparison. They shivered probably at their own audacity that out of such poverty they ventured to expect such an ending. Even the beautiful mother could have thought of nothing better. Even the Simeons and Annas, in the heights of spiritual apperception, could never have dared to think of one so tender, so strong, so loving as Jesus of Nazareth. The outcome both in depth and majesty was altogether beyond the best flight of imagination. Without noise of battle, without triumphal procession, Christ led men to such victory as Alexander and

Cæsar never knew. Men shouted in admiration for such generals as Alexander and Cæsar; but for Christ, the poor Galilean, there was a feeling too deep for any words, — He was not only Master and King, He was Brother and Lover.

And the Answer to men's hopes is greater in the Christ of to-day than it was in the Christ of Palestine. When Alexander was dead, his empire evaporated. People wondered, praised; but no one followed the vanished Alexander. Christ has been invisible these nineteen centuries, yet the efficient men of the civilised world still bow before His Name and say that He lives in them, that they live in Him, that therefore they are able to do what they do, to be what they are. Had the shepherds dared to say that they hoped the Baby of Bethlehem would become the Alexander of Palestine, the world would have laughed at fanatical peasants. As it has turned out, not even the dauntless St. Paul dared to hope enough. In Christ's Name, slavery is gone, hospitals are in every corner of the globe, Christian schools are every-

where, the love of Christ is proclaimed in continents yesterday unknown, nations are ruled and governed in His Name, — and the end is not yet. That is the way God treats human hopes.

With all this in mind, let us return to the hope in immortality. We need not listen for one moment to the timid people who urge us to beware of hoping too much. There are certain guides of youth who make it their chief business to go about reminding aspiring venturers that they are common clay, that therefore they can expect only common results. Ideals, say these guides, must be meagre and flat, lest disappointment meet one in middle life. Men are counselled to learn to enjoy mediocrity. This is pernicious advice, both false and cowardly. Since Jesus Christ became part of humanity, no man is "common clay." Any man who truly believes in the "God of hope" — as St. Paul calls Him¹ — is under obligation to hope the largest hope his mind will admit, knowing only that God will give him in the end better than he

¹ Romans xv. 13.

hoped for. Better a thousand times that a young man should strive and seem ignobly to fail — you notice that I say *seem* to fail, for no true man has ever really failed since Christ was nailed to the Cross — better a thousand times that he seem to fail than that he go plodding in hidden easy valleys all his days, with never a reverse. How contemptible is that folly which counsels a man to crawl on the earth, lest soaring he now and then get a fall. Men do not so often differ in talent or in native power as they differ in this willingness to take God at His word, and to reach out for what worldly wisdom calls the unattainable.

For what if the end come to the earthly career, and the hope seem unfulfilled? Eternity is in store. Never was a darker day than Good Friday for those who lived it. Never was a day so bright for all subsequent history. The hope seemingly unfulfilled is often in God's plans the hope in process of most glorious fulfilment. We can then afford to be scornful of those who, going one step farther down than the timid advisers of youth,

bid men be cautious how they hope in a life to come. In our quiet, happy moments we dream of space to do the deeds for which this world is too crowded; we think of meeting again those whom we have loved and lost, we think of recognising their dear faces, of hearing their very tones, of saying over the sweet memories of earth, and rejoicing together in the luminous freedom of a new life, where grief and torture are no more. Shall we measure and sift these dreams, lest we build too swiftly for God's accomplishment? What petty folly it all is! Of course God will not give us exactly what we hope for. The God who gave us the dreams, as He has given them to all men before us, will do something finer than that: He will always transcend our best and wildest hopes. All we need to do, therefore, as we face immortality, is to dream better dreams, more aspiring, more reckless.

III

As men go toward deeper trust in God, they cease to look for objective proofs of

immortality. They see so plainly that God ought to be trusted, that they would think that a poor conviction of immortality which was so independently clear that it did not require a trust in the goodness and the love of God.

Sometimes in the darkness of grief a person doubts what fate will befall a loved one who has passed beyond the bounds of this life. Then let the friend who would be a comforter ask, "What would *you* do for the soul who is gone, had you the power?" The answer will always be a succession of loving acts, helping, healing, strengthening, gladdening. Then the comforter may go straight to the mark, and say, "If you, with your little will, would do this, what do you think God, whose will is fused with perfect Love, will do?" It is to God that the doubter must turn, not to voices from the unseen world. Never was this whole truth more nobly expressed than in the poet's story of David, bringing comfort to King Saul. David yearned, —

"Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,
I would add, to that life of the past, both the future
and this;

I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages
hence,
As this moment, — had love but the warrant, love's
heart to dispense!"

That is what the loving man would do.
Then there sweeps over David the fear
of having greater love than God's, and
instantly he sees that his fear is absurd,
and the problem is solved.

“Behold, I could love if I durst!
But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'er-
take
God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain for
love's sake.
— What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when
doors great and small,
Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hun-
dredth appal?
In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the great-
est of all?
Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt His own love can compete with it? Here,
the parts shift?
Here, the creature surpass the Creator, — the end what
Began?
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this
man,
And dare doubt He alone shall not help him, who yet
alone can?”

Then comes David's sublime prayer of faith to God: —

“Oh, speak through me now!

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst Thou
— so wilt Thou!

So shall crown Thee the topmost, ineffablest, utter-
most crown —

And thy love fill infinitude wholly.”

With a shiver of joy the convinced soul must come from the dark cloud of fear into the radiance not of demonstrations, but of God.

I fancy that many clergymen have had constant experience that there is no comfort equal to that comfort which turns the troubled spirit to the God of Hope and Love. Still it is always valuable to cite a concrete instance, especially in parts of life which seem open to the charge of mysticism. It will be well then if we may find as an example a man who is not open to the accusation of being a dreamer. I suppose no profound thinker of the generation just closed was more practical than the late Frederick Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury. He lived his life among boys, among the poor, among

the workers, among the governors of a great nation. Not only so, but he was marked always as a peculiarly matter-of-fact person; his voice was gruff, his speech was plain to bluntness, his very face was the story of reality; one knew that the man always kept his two feet on the earth. It would be an important contribution to know how such a man arrived at his belief in immortality: we might rightly expect to find some sensible estimate of relative values. Fortunately we have a distinct word from him. One day the Archbishop was sitting in the study of one of the clergy of his diocese, and the conversation drifted to the subject of the future life. The clergyman said that he sometimes worried about the *endlessness* of time. The Archbishop held his peace; then his friend appealed to him directly: "Don't you," he said, "ever feel the mystery of the other life?" There was a pause. The old man turned in his chair, put his hand up to his chin, and looked steadily into the eyes of his host. "Yes," he said at last, "I think I know what you mean.

But I believe so entirely that God is my Father, and that He loves me, and that He will make me perfectly happy in the other life, that I never worry myself over what that life will be.”¹

That is the word of a man who was enabled to do great works for men. He believed in immortality. But his reason for doing so was because he believed in God. And his belief in God made him great.

¹ Life of Frederick Temple, vol. ii. p. 655.

CHAPTER VI

THE FUTURE LIFE INDESCRIBABLE IN TERMS OF THIS LIFE

WHEN one longs for news of the future life one is not much helped by reading the visions of St. John of Patmos nor the exalted poetry of St. Bernard of Cluny. The vague, though confident, assurances of Jesus are infinitely more comforting. He tells us little more than the bare fact of future existence; and we begin to reflect that the life to which we shall go when this life is over is so far beyond the ranges of our present living that there is no medium of sense — either of sight, of touch, or of language — which can convey to us any picture of what that life is and is to be.

The man who rebels because the order of God's universe does not permit him, still a citizen of earth, to know exactly what his departed brother is doing, needs first of all a lesson in modesty. He would

wisely perhaps set himself the perplexing task of reading a little in Kant's *Kritik*, and shake himself down to the conviction that time and space are conditions of our earthly consciousness. We can think of nothing which is not in time, and of nothing which does not have position and extent. And yet here is this baffling old philosopher, with his great following of clear thinkers, who convicts time and space of being the clownish dress with which we poor earth-bound creatures must clothe all our thoughts. If, then, in the world to come, we are to be rid of time and space, how can we know anything of a world so different from ours? We grow sufficiently modest to believe that there is a world all about us more real, if possible, than this world, — a world which is quite hidden from our sight. We cannot pout and grumble because God does not show it to us. We could not understand it if He were to show it to us. It is beyond our present powers of comprehension.

So, too, the mathematician comes to explain to us that we now live in a world

of three dimensions. He imagines how exceedingly limited would be the observation of a being who lived in only one dimension: unless beings of more than one dimension invaded his particular line, he would never know that they existed, — and even when they crossed his line, the consciousness of their presence would be only a sort of “inner voice.” With such imagining the mathematician goes forward to the unknown but perfectly possible conclusion that when we pass from this world we pass to a life of four, or perhaps twenty, dimensions. Daring is the man who attempts a picture, even in lines, of what that life of more than three dimensions may be. But he must know this: we, with our consciousness limited to three dimensions, could not grasp the reality of any existing life which required more than three dimensions for its expression. Perhaps above, and around, and beneath us, there are the beings of many dimensions. It is perfectly possible. By our nature we cannot see them. We need humbly to remember our limitations.

With such philosophical and mathematical contentions in mind let us think of more ordinary reasons for believing that we could not understand the world to which we tend, even if it were to be shown to us. That life certainly must be farther in advance of this life here, than mature life is in advance of childhood. Children see with their outward eyes much that their parents are doing, but they have little comprehension of vast reaches in this older life upon which they look. What does a child of four or five understand of his father's business? He sees his father go to his work in the morning and he sees him come home at night. He knows that his father spends the day in an office or a shop. This office or this shop the child has seen. He may even have heard his father tell his mother about stocks and bonds and the fluctuating values of the market. But what does that slip of a boy know about the hard and tragic life of the business world where his father is striving? Nothing whatever! It is to him as the land of the fifth dimension. If he thinks about it at all,

he probably thinks that business is something like spinning a top or rolling marbles. On the rare occasions when his father comes home irritable and grim, he may fancy that business is something like being forced to wash one's hands when they are not sufficiently soiled. Nor does the father deem himself cruel for keeping from his child the realities of this mature life, to which the child at last must come. Perhaps the father intends to pass on his business to his boy: even such a purpose does not impel the father to try the impossible task of making him see what business is. He leaves his child to live the child's life. The future, with its joys and troubles, waits upon the realities of the present. May we not believe that our heavenly Father leaves us altogether to this life, because no demonstration or exhibition of facts could make us understand the world to come? If we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, shall not our heavenly Father give good gifts to those who trust Him?

Let us now look off in another direction. We know that some parts of this

small planet are far in advance of other parts, in civilisation, in aspiration, in religious expression. Even as far as the Hottentot may be from the Archbishop of Canterbury, we may believe that there is to be, in some sense, more of a change in the passing of our life here to the life beyond the shadows than there is between the life of the man in the jungle and the life of the most cultivated and spiritual. I say, you will notice, *in some sense*; for there is an eternal quality in character which must be reckoned with. The sense in which I speak must be the outward surroundings, the more material advantages and disciplines. Well, imagine a savage, knowing nothing beyond his native forest, sleeping upon the ground, eating the wild food of bush or stream; and knowing no ambition but to hunt and kill. Then imagine that to this savage there came a man from some far-away European capital, who, through an interpreter, told him of buildings six hundred feet in height, of steamships, of telegraphs, of telephones, of self-propelled carriages, of airships, — what,

pray, do you think the staring savage would understand of it all? I am not asking whether he would believe it. Probably it would be to him so unintelligible that he would not believe one syllable of the foreigner's accurate account: he would think it the grossest nonsense, more silly than the myths of his babyhood. But this is beyond the point. All that need be insisted upon is that the savage could not understand the description of a life so totally different from anything which he had experienced. Are we rash in thinking that the life to which we go will have marvels as far beyond our present experience as the civilisation of our modern cities and universities is beyond the experience of the African bushman? Let us not accuse God of being hard upon us because He will not tell us about paradise and heaven: what *could* we understand were all the angels and saints to come to us with the most accurate and exact descriptions? Nothing at all. Let us be frank about it. Nothing at all!

Nor is there any sound reason for

stopping with the obvious differences in the ages of an individual man, or with the differences in the grades of civilisation. We may be not far from truth if we think the promotion from this world to the next as great a change as would be the promotion of the so-called dumb animal to the estate of a living soul which we call man. We may believe that M. Maeterlinck has truly discovered much of the real life of the bee, and we may yield ourselves, in spite of Mr. John Burroughs, to the racy morals of Mr. Thompson-Seton's bears and foxes. But if any poet and naturalist attempted to describe to us what the bee or the ant or the bear thought when the bee or the ant or the bear caught a glimpse of an American mother as she learned that her son had given his life for his country at the Battle of Antietam, we should laugh him to scorn. Or if the same poetical observer tried to tell us how an ox or a horse rejoiced because his master had been enraptured by Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, we should put his book in the fire. There are some things too absurd

for endurance. The over-candid philosopher sometimes believes that the monkey pities men because men have not yet risen to the chattering bliss of a monkey, and cannot swing from tree to tree by trusty tails. But the ordinary man knows by more than his own self-complacency that the dumb animals are a lower order of beings. As the ordinary man hopelessly watches the birds and wonders what they are twittering about, so he knows that if the birds think of us at all they are infinitely more perplexed about our lives than we about theirs. There is a great gulf fixed between us. Our lives seem to touch; they only *seem* to do so. Really we may believe that farthest star is closer to farthest star. And it may be — who can tell? — that when we pass from earth to heaven we shall bridge a wider chasm than yawns between the jelly-fish and Shakespeare. We need to be very modest how we speak of our rights and capacities to know what God shall give us in the world to come.¹

¹ For a similar analogy suggesting the difficulty of imagining the outward covering and circumstances of our future

It is extremely good for us to discover that we live on a bit of an island among the worlds. Many things acquire their due proportion then. We do not need to sit at the feet of philosophers and mathematicians to learn how circumscribed is our power of knowing any other kind of life than the exact sort of human life which we are now living. It ought not really to cause us perplexity because those who go from us in what is called death vanish so completely as they do. Their coming back to tell us of their joys could give us no satisfaction. We could not understand them, if they came to sit each day by our tables. Their coming would start more questions than all the

life, see M. Maeterlinck ["Life and Flowers," tr. A. T. de Mattos, pp. 24 ff. *condensed*]:—

"Picture a man blind, paralysed, and deaf until his thirtieth year. The only equipment of his consciousness, of his ego, the only recollections of his identity will be a few wretched sensations of heat and cold, of weariness and rest, of physical sufferings, of hunger and thirst. Nevertheless, the idea of entering into eternity without carrying with him the emotions and memories of his dark and silent sick-bed will plunge him into despair. Suppose further, however, that a miracle suddenly quicken his eyes and ears, and reveal to him through the open window at the head of his bed the dawn rising over the plain, the song of the birds in the trees, the murmuring

world could answer. As David believed when he lost his baby centuries ago, so we may believe that, though they shall not come to us, we, when we have finished our course here, shall go to them, — and then — when we have won the consciousness which belongs to the new life — we shall understand it all. Then, — and only then.

This may sound like a hard lesson in the crabbed facts of life. But surely it is legitimate to look deeper, and to see the interpretation of these facts, in the revealed heart of the God of the Universe. We find that we cannot grasp the future. When we think of God in the face of

of the wind in the leaves and of the water against its banks, the ringing of human voices among the morning hills. Suppose also the same miracle restore the use of his limbs. He rises, stretches his arms to that prodigy which as yet for him possesses neither reality nor name — the light. He opens the door, staggers out amidst the effulgence, and his whole body dissolves in all these marvels. He enters upon an ineffable life, upon a sky whereof no dream could have given him a foretaste, and by a freak which is admissible in this sort of cure, health, introducing him to this inconceivable and unintelligible existence, wipes out in him all memory of days past.

“What will be the state,” asks M. Maeterlinck, “of that ego, that central focus, that egotic point of his being? At

Jesus Christ, we may say that we ought not to know the future. Faith is still better than knowledge. If we knew all things to the last eternity we should not find rest. One way there is to peace, and that is the way that leads us to trust God — to trust Him for little and great — for all. The world is His. Every atom of it is in His keeping. Because we *know* that He loves us, we have faith that He is saving up for us immortality. Because we know Him, the future is for us secure, eternally, most invincibly secure. Accordingly it is a great and holy truth that our consciousness is limited — limited to the observations and feelings of time and space, of a world of three dimensions, of a human existence, of life in the twentieth Christian century.

what corner of his past will the man clutch to continue his identity? Have we any idea in what manner the ego of yesterday will unite with the ego of to-day, and how the egotic point, the sensitive point, of the personality, the only point which we are anxious to preserve intact, will bear itself in that delirium and that upheaval? If, then, we are unable to reply with sufficient preciseness to this question, which comes within the scope of our actual and visible life, how can we hope to solve the other problem that presents itself before every man at the moment of his death?"

We are so limited that we may the better yield ourselves to Him, and become as little children.

“Keep Thou my feet! I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.”

CHAPTER VII

NECESSARY IDEAS ATTACHING TO IMMORTAL LIFE

THE Life to Come must be left with God to be His great and beautiful surprise for us when we shall reach it. It is of faith and not of knowledge; yet there are certain vague outlines which our faith in Him and our knowledge of Him through Christ require. In other words there are what the late John Fiske used to call necessary ideas; that is, ideas which persist in asserting their dominance over the human mind age after age, however the wise and powerful try to blot them out. These necessary ideas attach themselves to men's thought of immortality; and we grow sure of certain lines and colours in the picture of eternity. There is the poet's story of the country boy who had never seen the sea. One day someone brought him a shell. He gazed at it, wondering if it really had come from

such a place as men had told him about. At last he held it to his ear.

“ In silence hushed, his very soul
Listened intensely; and his countenance soon
Brightened with joy; for from within were heard
Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed
Mysterious union with its native sea.”

He had never seen the sea; but now all his boyish longings were satisfied. He heard the fishermen sing their songs along the coast; he heard the waves beat themselves into a storm; he saw sea and sky meet in one vast whole; he saw the stars come out one by one over the dreary expanse. He knew the sea. So we listen to the necessary ideas of the world: they lie along the shores of the world as the shells lie among the sands. We listen, and we hear the songs of eternity. We close our eyes, and we see paradise and heaven. Faint as the outlines may be, we become sure of some things about the Life Immortal.

I

Personal Identity

Sometimes there arises a Western thinker who bids us flee from what he

is pleased to call our vulgar ideas of personal immortality, and asks us to be content with reabsorption into the great general soul from which we came. In other words, we are invited to believe that at death we lose our identity: having been as drops of rain, we fall into the sea and are lost in the myriad waters, indistinguishable parts of one fluid whole.

This is of course the classic Buddhist doctrine of the East. It has affected the thinkers of the West from time to time. The Manichæans caught it up, and with it besieged the early Church. But the necessary idea of free Western thought has always denied it. We cannot hold the quizzical Socrates too literally to his reported sayings; but he seems to be proclaiming the instinctive trust in personal identity when he cries to his friends, "Let them bury me — if they can catch me; but I myself will be out of their reach." And the Christian Church has always been emphatic, for this has certainly been the meaning of the Church when the creed was made to say, "I believe in the resurrection of the

dead . . . of the body . . . of the flesh.” All possible exactness was needed, — even at the risk of exaggeration in the use of the word *flesh*, — to make men know that the Church was sure of the preservation of their personal identity.

It must be granted on the other hand that a necessary idea is contained within the exaggeration of absorption into a great all-being, or world-self. That idea is the principle of personal relationships, of solidarity, of unity. The selfishness of some forms of the Christian doctrine of immortality is little short of ghastly. The smug satisfaction of the mediæval saint, leaving the world to its misery and sin, that he might fit his own miserable and puny soul for heaven, is not edifying, is not Christian. We have grown to think the saint a truer saint if, with some little flecks from the naughty world, he has staid in the world and helped to raise others with himself towards the heavenly vision. It is the great and growing sense of brotherhood, of mutual responsibility, that is making us feel that we must reach that other country with the rest

of mankind, or it will, after all, be a sad and mournful abode for our loving, unselfish hearts. That is the ideal toward which we strive. It is the kernel of vital truth hid within the Buddhist's doctrine of Nirvâna.

But to make that unity a real unity, we need the infinite variety of numberless self-hoods. I do not know how the whole idea could be more clearly expressed than in the experience, from which I have already quoted, of the man who for seven days hovered between life and death. "I," he said, "who in my living life had clung so hard to personality, had said there was no 'after' if the ego ceased to be, I, as I, did not exist. The individual was too little. And yet I was."¹ Yes, we all grow to feel that the individual is too little. It needs all other individuals and God to make it important. It must take its place, humble and necessary, in the music of the spheres, but it only seems to be lost. Being lost, it is found. And it is an individual still; only in a higher, truer sense. It knows

¹ Hibbert Journal, April, 1907, p. 555.

relationship which fuses all life to itself, even God's. But its personal identity is forever preserved.

The world returns to this conception of personal identity so tenaciously that it is not squeamish about a survival of some sort of body. St. Paul in a daring paradox tells us comfortingly of the spiritual body. He certainly did not mean that the same particles of matter which went into the grave were reunited to make the spiritual body: God gives the body that pleases Him. The common man, apart from difficulties, apart from philosophical distinctions, has always understood what St. Paul meant, and has found in his words a necessary idea. The spirit of man writes itself in the material face of a man. The features may be irregular, unbeautiful, yet into that strange physical something the man's soul comes and tells a winning story. The common man, once he has come to depend upon the expression of such a face, has little trust in disembodied spirits. He craves, he demands, he confidently expects the outward manifestations by

which he can know even as he is known. Our identity will be preserved not only for ourselves, but for those who depend upon us.

All this may be said as vaguely as it ought to be said, and yet there will be the feeling that there is something about our physical bodies which is immortal. As I can grasp the trend of modern science, this is not out of harmony with any hypothesis of a future life which science to-day is willing to postulate. For is not science tending more and more to find spirit and matter necessary parts of a whole? Let this thought too be as vague as you please, and let the terms be changed to any technical phrase that seems best. Matter is always fading, for the physicist, into unknown, perhaps unknowable, forces, and, as Sir Oliver Lodge has taught us,¹ the physicist must take the doctrine of conservation of energy and of matter more or less on trust. Professor Shaler warned us not many years ago² how mysterious and unpredictable are

¹ "Life and Matter," pp. 21 ff.

² "The Individual," pp. 286-346.

the changes in the universe. He took what he thought the simplest illustration; namely, water under varying degrees of heat. Beginning at a high temperature, the elements are dissociated. As the temperature is lowered, the unseen gases fly together and a drop of mist is formed. No one could have predicted such a substance from the former substances had he not seen it; it would even be difficult to accept the report of it from another who said that he had seen such a phenomenon. Again, the temperature is lowered, and vapour becomes fluid; once again, and the fluid becomes solid. These, says the scientist, are all momentous changes: science rightly stands in awe before them. The identity is preserved, yet the manifestation is changed. "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him." Science is more and more impressed also with the variety in the material universe. It is suspected that among the hundred million suns and the thousand million planets within the range of vision there are no repetitions, but each sun, each planet, has its individual marks.

We think again, "If He so clothe the grass of the field, shall He not much more clothe you?" Science has slight word to say about the future life, but it is suggesting as never before, with its keen and reverent observation, that it would find no reason for amazement, if we, countless, varied individuals, should come to express our personality, our individuality, in bodies unlike those we now have, but strangely identified with them, strangely the same.

And with this report of the mysteries, almost prophetic, of modern scientific investigation, we turn again the leaves of our New Testaments, and we meditate upon the shadowy, difficult stories of our risen Saviour. We feel that His body must be in some way as our bodies shall be. We can get no clear description. But we know that as He went with His friends to Emmaus, their hearts burned within them as they walked with Him by the way. He was different, — yet He was the same.

We do not need to press details; we do not need to build up a theory. There

is behind the various lines of thought, — religious, philosophical, scientific, — the insistent necessary idea: However we change, however we rise to the splendour of new relationships, however we learn to merge our lives in the light of those who surround the King, we shall still keep our personal, individual identity. I shall be I; and you will be you. And we shall know, and be known, one of another.

The possible splendour of the great change is suggested by St. Paul's supreme doctrine of Justification by Faith. God, in His love, may clothe us with qualities for which we never strove, won by our Elder Brother Christ. Indeed, we are sure that we must share increasingly the redeemed humanity which is ours by His victory. Not by our own sword is the battle gained, but by our willingness to accept what God's right arm has done for us. We must, if we will, pass from glory unto glory. Yes, dim and wonderful is the certain change; but it is *we* who are changed, and we shall be ourselves to the end of the endless growth.

II

Character a Determining Factor

There is a sort of popular theology, made mostly by the undisciplined man as he lounges down the street, which says that God, having made a world which is for most men at times rather uncanny and austere, will in another world smooth out all our troubles and faults. Such people say that God *must* do this, because He is a God of Love. Certainly, through Christ, we do know that God is a God of Love. But the quality of that love is not indifference. God is not like the father who receives his boy home from a debauch with the same indulgent smile which he would have bestowed upon him had he come home from an act of heroism in his country's honour. God cares whether we are beasts or saints; and as in this world, so in that, the beasts must go one way, the saints another. The scientific temper is laying the axe mightily against the tree of complacent safety. The most stable of material objects, hills, seas, planets, stars — all

shall waste away. With this remembrance, science looks upon animate objects, and finds certain men so low in the scale that the industrious and clever beavers, the household pets, the domestic animals, are more fit to survive than they. The doctrine of evolution, science reminds us, shows that only that which is strong, worthy, survives. All the weak, inefficient lives must be deserted, absorbed. Science is a pitiless prophet.

The Gospel has a higher, gladder message. It tells of a Father's love going out in search of the lost sheep, — until it is found. But even the Gospel implies that the life can be so meagre that it will have no spark of light to respond to the appeal. In any case, it is worth noticing that the self-complacent, self-indulgent, careless soul receives his rebuke not first from a dogmatic Christianity, but from the boasted impartiality of science. Dying, the worldly Goethe cried out pathetically, "More light!" and the licentious Byron was morbid at the end, murmuring, "I must sleep now." Even a cold science feels a strange

distinction when it turns from such men to the dying moment of William of Orange; for he said with an unclouded vitality, "I commit my poor people to God and myself to God's great captain, Christ." When Goethe and Byron died the children played as if nothing had happened; when the children heard that the Prince of Orange was dead, they went up the street and down the street, the hot tears falling on their cheeks. *There is a difference.* Science feels it, childhood feels it. Some people go through the world gathering life that shall endure; others waste life, step by step, and go out with so little that one wonders what they can have to carry with them. One of the tenderest men this country ever produced said that when some men died it was as if one had lost one's pocket-knife and one would be at endless inconvenience till one had found another; but when other men died it was as if a mountain had been removed from the landscape. A man's worth must be judged by those who are nearest and dearest to him. Poverty, wealth; learning, ignorance; awkward-

ness, grace; power, obscurity; — not one of these things matters. Manhood, womanhood, stand just for themselves at last.

The appalling truth is that there is an awful difference between man and man. Science, with its stern prose, tells us to take sharp note of it. You religious people, it seems to say, talk of a world to come. Very well, I — Science — have no objection to that. But mark this: that world is apt to be a revealer of differences which, though existing here, pass unnoticed. When you are rid of the particular kind of a body which the Creator has given you in this world, it is wise to think cunningly how much soul, how much real life, you have been carrying about in this body. God, your Bible says, will give you then such a body as shall please Him; and it seems to me — Science — that it shall be in that other world such a body as shall represent exactly what you are. It may be that the pompous, shrivelled soul here shall be living in a body there no more pretentious than the shell of a snail; and

some obscure creature, fighting well against hard conditions in this world's dark corners, shall stride through that New Jerusalem with the strength that befits his reality and his courage.

Many things must be obscure in our vision of the coming life. But the supreme interior fact, character, is certain. The conquest which we build into our souls here must survive: there are possessions, hardly won, which we can take with us when we die. All avenues of thought, from most tortuous to plainest and straightest, lead to this conviction. Character is a determining factor in all thoughts of immortality.

III

The Survival of the Missionary Spirit

There is in the world to-day what is conveniently called the missionary spirit. It manifests itself in the Christian physician who gives his skill for a barely living wage that he may heal and comfort the ignorant poor in the nation of China. It also manifests itself in the so-called

agnostic settlement worker in the degraded streets of our great cities at home. Wherever a man or a woman reaches out hands of help to one less fortunate or less good, there you have a picture of the missionary.

Few are the persons who, meditating upon immortality, do not think of dear ones who in this earth were not their strength, but were instead their constant grief and anxiety. They were offered everything high and good, but, for some reason, they would not believe it high and good. They rejected the best and accepted the worst. They fell into sin as into a mire. Then, fearfully smeared and stained, they vanished. In one sense they were not much comfort, — but, oh, how they were loved in spite of all! And their beloved love them still, and long to see them at the last.

It is difficult to tell what the outcome will be for these sorry souls. If the most beautiful was offered them here, and they would not accept it, perhaps they will not accept it there. But one fact is increasingly certain to the Christian

instinct: they who loved them here shall love them there, and that love shall still compass them about. What men tried to do for them here, they shall try to do for them there. The Gospel of Christ can mean nothing less than that. Sin is not one whit less horrible. The amazing and awful risk is not reduced: sin may be so black that it will blot even love from our eyes. But those who love us must forever be casting their love about us with all the passion of fulfilling God's ideal for our fallen nature. Else what would heaven be! It would be a selfish place, where we were to enjoy our separation from the condemned, our freedom from unwholesome neighbours, whose shortcomings grievously annoyed us here: nothing better than that. It reminds one of the courtly old hall in Nuremberg where all the pride of the ancient city used to keep high festival. As the traveller is shown the great hall, and is bidden remember the grandeur of the noble men and fair women who once adorned its state, he is delighted; but when a moment later, he is shown, be-

neath this very room, a series of deep dungeons, where men were imprisoned and tortured, whose agony was deepening while the gaiety above was heightening, the delight all fades away, and a profound horror comes. The room of the feasters, once so entrancing, becomes hideous with its inhuman mockery and hardness and selfishness. The followers of Christ can believe in no heaven like that. He who on earth touched the leper and the Magdalen will be leading His disciples still in mercy and love. If men filled with His love go out here to help, they shall go out there. If they fail here, I fear they may fail there. A man is eternally free, and neither Love nor Christ can compel a man to be righteous against his choice.

There have been periods in the history of Christianity when people calling themselves Christians gloated over the number of the lost. We cannot easily forget Tennyson's pious aunt, who would weep for hours because God was so infinitely good. "Has he not damned," she cried, "most of my friends? But *me, me* He

has picked out for eternal salvation, *me* who am no better than my neighbours.” One day she said cheerfully to her nephew, “Alfred, Alfred, when I look at you I think of the words of Holy Scripture — ‘Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.’”¹ This may be an exaggerated form of such selfishness, but even to the best of men there comes the desire to be in some sheltered valley where the wicked cease from troubling.

Just here we catch a glimpse of what the Buddhist is catching at in his grim philosophy. It is the old Christian story that no man lives to himself, and no man dies to himself. As the house where the father of the prodigal son lived was cast about with shadows till the poor, deluded boy returned, so will heaven be less than heaven till all the heavenly missionaries have gathered in all who have misunderstood, all who have not cared. To one who sails the sea, the sea seems like eternity; and one thinks of God’s good ship, strong and great, bearing the saved through the deep waters. And continu-

¹ Life of Tennyson, vol. i. p. 15.

ally in the voyage through the endless time, God's great ship must be picking up those on the frail little skiffs who have vainly dreamed that they were meant to sail the lonely sea by their own wit and might. They will come up close to the edge of the great ship, and the sailors, who are the saints, will reach down hands to draw them up with ropes and cords of love; and soon the rescued will be standing on the firm deck watching their tiny craft float away, as the ship goes on its journey. Occasionally a speck on the horizon will tell of another self-willed barque; and the great ship instantly will turn from its course to meet it. Lifeboats will be put out and messengers will speak of the kindness of the ship's dear Master, and if they consent to come, even late as it may be in the timeless years, all the music of the ship will be sounding as they come on board — quite as it was when the poor starving lad came home again from a certain far country.

What the outcome may be we cannot tell. One's theology may be stern and forbidding: it may seem almost certain

that some shall be lost. But he is far from the spirit of Christ who does not at least *hope*, and hope with prayer, that all men shall ultimately be saved. Meantime, we may be altogether sure that the spirit of Christ which to-day sends Christian men into every nook and cranny of the world's evil and sorrow, seeking whom it may help and restore, is going to keep on sending such Christian men on their merciful errand until the last poor soul, weary and foul, has turned from his sin and selfishness, and has surrendered to happiness and love in the face of Jesus Christ.

IV

The Citizenship of Heaven

Since it is a necessary idea that there is in human character something which endures, it becomes evident that as we know well the character of certain persons who have passed to the life unseen, just in so far do we know that unseen life. We do not know outward conditions; we do not know ways and means

of expression. But we do know the subtle depths of character, which cannot fail to contribute important elements to whatever the future may bring forth. May it not be somewhat as in the old days of discovery, when men bade good-bye to their old homes and set sail upon the western sea? There was land far to the westward, but what it was they did not know. So, for a time, those who remained at home could not tell the condition of their beloved who had ventured into the unknown distance. But they were not without some valid imagination of the new life. It is quite true that they could not know whether it were hot or cold; blooming with trees and flowers, or deserted and barren; a mountain or a plain. One great fact, however, they did know: their beloved in the new land were the same men and women whom they had valued and loved in the old land. How quickly then the imagination filled in the details. Whatever the landscape, whatever the wealth, these brave souls would tend to make the country like themselves. In the free air of a

larger opportunity, their robust natures would build themselves into what at last should be the whole atmosphere of the region.

So it must be with the great undiscovered country to which our friends go, one by one. Every dear soul, as it passes through the gateway, gives us added knowledge of the joy of the Blessed Country. Are there streets of gold? Is all ethereal, like the gorgeous clouds at sunset? Shall we work and sing, as here? How many questions come rushing into our bewildered brains! How many things there are which we cannot know at all! But think of this which we do know: *they* are there, — those we knew and loved in the years that are gone, whom still to-day, after silence and long absence, we know and love as we had seen them yesterday.

We feel the more keenly how much is revealed by the knowledge of human characters, if we reflect upon our attitude toward places in this world. The ambitious youth, feeling cramped by the environment of some provincial town,

wanders away to the great European capital. There he learns some art or profession under recognised masters; but at last his heart turns to the relatives, friends, and neighbours who, in his formative years, grew into his life. And perhaps he goes back to that apparently narrow community and plies his art or exercises his skill. The lives, so dear, so intimate, grow still deeper into the fibre of his soul. He finds in them solace and incentive and inspiration. He does not see bewildering crowds of people; but he sees a few fine spirits whom he knows through and through. To know these, to have these for constant companions, is better than all the bewildering attractiveness of London, Paris, and Rome. It is perhaps one of the signs of a wholesome maturity that a man begins to care little where his home is if he may have the companionship of a sufficient number of life-giving friends. To grow into the noble lives about him and to feel their lives growing into his is, more than anything else, true life. Whether heaven be like ancient

Athens in the age of Pericles, or like a western hamlet in the age of Abraham Lincoln, makes little difference. What matters supremely is that true men and women whom we have valued have taken their radiant characters into the eternal.

Nor can we forget the great souls in all ages, whose characters we know by tradition and history. In so far as we know Isaiah and St. Paul; Plato and Cicero; St. Francis and Richard Hooker, — just so far is our knowledge of the future life increased. They, having won characters of astonishing excellence, have carried those characters into what ceases to be the unknown country, inasmuch as they are known. How our intercourse with these great ones shall be magnified or limited is beyond our most clever surmise; but the life, the atmosphere, of the world to be revealed is to some extent of their making.

We must go even farther. Here we may leap boldly forward into more daring imagination. There are people whom we have seen on city street or in

country lane, whose faces haunt us because they tell so much of character and interest. A face seen for an instant, and then forever gone? No! Somewhere that face of prophecy and of promise shall be seen again and its message shall be revealed. We live on a very tiny island in these little days of earth. We gaze into the far-off blue by day, and into the faces of the stars by night, — and we suspect how little we know of the real greatness and interest of this present life. Great works as the conspicuous and famous have done, works even greater have been accomplished by those who did their work in silence and “scorned to blot it with a name.” The throng of unknown men and women who in all ages have taken the souls God gave them, have kept them unspotted, and have made them what God dreamed they should be, — these, as they pass, build up the high towers of Zion with their hard-won characters. Overwhelming and dazzling as the thought may be, it is legitimate. Impossible as it is to describe the life of the future, we feel its

necessary kinship with the life of earth, because we have felt the enduring quality of human character.

Only one more daring venture may we make in this connection. People cannot understand why innocent children, the joy of happy homes, are taken out of the world. These children often seem destined to do important service; some harsh, disagreeable child across the way lives in full health to be an uncomfortable and vicious citizen. The friend who would be a comforter, when such queries are put forth from grief and doubt, is cautious how he attempts answers, lest they be fanciful, almost insincere. But it is more than possible that God may have some wonderful reason for taking into the eternal life those who are yet unspoiled and trusting children. Perhaps those so born into new life, having died to this, will be developed as little children. They will not grow to be matured characters, with childhood passed and forgotten as a stepping-stone to their rounded later life; but they will remain children; only grow-

ing more beautiful, more perfectly trustful. I believe it is always the testimony of a mother who has had several children, that if one of them die as a child, he alone is the child to her always. The others are men and women, and their childhood is dim, unreal, forgotten. It may be a type of the reality. When she gathers her dear ones about her in the Kingdom Fulfilled, mature and dignified men and matrons will come to her side, but among them shall be the child, — a child still, though changed, though developed, though perfected, — *her* child in spite of all the lapse of years. I do not wish to turn this thought into a hard argument, but simply to offer it as an indication of the sort of knowledge which the experience of earth gives us, towards an intimation at least of what heaven is to be. I know of no more effective expression of the idea than is given in these verses of a bereaved father: —

“My darling boy, so early snatched away
From arms still seeking thee in empty air,
That thou shouldst come to me I do not pray,
Lest, by thy coming, heaven should be less fair.

“Stay, rather, in perennial flower of youth,
Such as the Master, looking on, must love;
And send to me the spirit of the truth,
To teach me of the wisdom from above.

“Beckon to guide my thoughts, as stumblingly
They seek the kingdom of the undefiled;
And meet me at its gateway with thy key, —
The unstained spirit of a little child.”¹

In all directions, therefore, whether the character be that we have known through books or face to face, — whether the life be matured and rounded or charmingly sweet in its naïve beginnings in the years of babyhood, — wherever, however, we have known character, and have seen it pass out into the unseen, thereby, precisely by our knowledge of this precious reality, do we know somewhat the content of that unseen life. Vague, enticing, bewildering, it must still be: but in some real way our entrance into it must be a sort of home-coming. We shall not have sung in vain of all the “raptured greetings.”

¹ Professor F. G. Peabody, Dedication of “Jesus Christ and the Christian Character.”

V

“The King of the Country”

To those who believe in the revelation of Jesus Christ, the clearest intimation of the Immortal Life comes from a study of the earthly career of Jesus of Nazareth. For it is His Character, revealed in the simplest and most sublime of lives, that has ruled and shall forever rule the destinies of all created beings. Because the Character of Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, therefore we know the controlling power and influence of eternity. We know the heart of God.

If men had more consistently interpreted our Saviour's "hard sayings" by His evident deeds, there would have been less scandal in the pages of theology: Schoolmen and Calvinists would not have wandered so far from the spirit of Christ. All the intimations of the future life which are most satisfying to the Christian reason are found in the attitude of Jesus to Peter, and Judas, and

Martha, and the Marys, — to soldiers, to publicans, to unhappy women. As He touched sorrow and pain and sin, and brought joy and health and goodness, so must His presence, consciously recognised, always work miracles. The only barrier is the unwilling spirit of man. He who will receive, shall receive. In such case there is no limit to the pity, the forgiveness, the tender help of the eternal Christ. His kingdom shall come; His rule shall be complete.

As we know the Carpenter of Nazareth, the Teacher of Capernaum, the Crucified of Calvary, we know Whom we shall meet. We dwell upon the story of His infinite kindness. Now and again, we feel our nearness to Him. We acknowledge the unspeakable comfort of His presence in some dark grief; sometimes a joy comes which is so great that we must tell it first of all to Him. And then we think of the day when we shall see Him as He is, — when we shall see Him face to face. We can make no picture of His outward appearance. We can tell little of His words, of His deeds:

but the Christ who shall be behind all the expression of that new life, whatever it shall be, will be the Christ of Palestine.

To some of us, meeting Christ face to face, has a sound of awe, almost of dread. We are thinking of theology. We think of Him as our Judge, in some harsh, outward sense. We think how before Him all our secrets will be disclosed. We dread His glance of utter disappointment. We are not unwise to remember all this; but we must not let it usurp all our thought of Him. That is not the whole Christ who is represented simply as our Judge.

There are certain eminent, serene souls in this earth to-day, with whom it is rest and refreshment to be, even for a moment. They may say not a word. About them is an atmosphere, sparkling, ennobling. In such a presence we forget to be selfish, we forget to be feverishly alert for what is beyond us, we forget to be envious and jealous and mean. Someway the earth seems to be in tune after all. Someway we do and say what is best in us, and we are amazed to find out who we are at our

best. It is not merriment, it is not noisy confusion whereby we forget our ills, it is no sophistry by which we explain away what is dull and bitter in life. It is merely the presence of a great soul, which makes all life beautiful and significant and harmonious, just as long as we may live near it. There are a few such people in the world. All that they are is a remote suggestion of what we shall find in our Saviour when we know Him face to face. To know one who will be invariably just and considerate and, above all, filled with love; to feel the strength and the fruition of such a presence constantly, is Life, — and nothing else is Life. To hear His “Well done!” will be more than music; to hear His assurance, “Ye are my friends!” will be more than joy. The land that seems very far off becomes near and intimate when we remember that its ruler is Christ our Lord.

So we come again to the thought of faith. Many questions about the Life to Come must remain unanswered. But as faith grows firm, we care little for the

haze. For faith shows us the outlines of ineffable joy. We are content to wait. We may pray and hope and expect; the morning will

“see our old prayers, granted, melt
Each like a little cloud.”

Always will our best thought be less than the reality. We dream of the glorified Christ, and how we shall

“take His hand and go with Him
To the deep wells of light.”

But He must be such friend and king as we never dared to hope. As tired children lay their heads against a loving father, so we cease to question and to tremble, and we trust our immortality to our eternal Father, God.

CHAPTER VIII

PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD

THERE is a hard question about prayer which almost every one asks at some time. I may frame the question somewhat after this fashion: "We have prayed for our relatives and friends all through their life on earth, and these prayers have been both relief and consolation to us. But when the life here is over, and they enter upon a new life in some world unknown to us, shall we then leave their names out of our prayers? Shall we no longer pray for them?"

We shall come to a safer answer if we look at this alluring question from an historical standpoint, — at least at first. For the mistakes which history has proved to be mistakes we are not bound to make again. What then does history say of prayers for the departed?

I

The history of such prayers may conveniently be put into four periods.

1. First, in the earliest age, — the age of the New Testament and the time immediately following, — we find, so far as I know, no trace of prayers for the departed. This is to be accounted for by the fact that it was an age of the most exultant faith. The words of the Saviour were still ringing in men's ears: "In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you." There was no dread of following the Saviour into the unknown. St. Paul said that he could not decide which he would rather do, — go through the gate of death and be forever with the Lord in richest life, or stay and help his friends who needed his comfort and strength here on earth. In the second century men like Polycarp almost insisted on martyrdom. And a man's birthday was reckoned to be not the day when he came into this world, but the glorious day when he entered the brighter world

beyond. Moreover, the expectation of Christ's second coming was so persistent that the sense of separation was slight. "Ah, my brother," one can fancy that men said, "thou art gone from us, but in a few days at most the Lord will be here, and we shall all be together again around Him." These men of the earliest age lived in such fulness of life that they seemed to recognise no barriers. Life was all one.

2. About a hundred years after St. John, we find the clear intimation that the Church was remembering the departed faithful in her prayers and thanksgivings. We cannot tell just when this custom began. It may have been very much earlier than this. In any case we find that these prayers are full of trust and hope. There was the confidence that the vanished souls were in rest and happiness. Men quoted such snatches of the Psalms as these: "Return again unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath rewarded thee;" "I will fear no evil, because thou art with me;" "Thou art my refuge from the affliction that compasseth

me about.” “Remember, O Lord,” a prayer composed a little later read, “all thy servants, men and women, who have gone before us in the seal of the faith, and sleep in the sleep of peace: we beseech thee, O Lord, to grant them, and all that rest in Christ, a place of refreshment, light, and peace, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.” This prayer breathes assurance; but it is not the full and rich assurance of the days of St. Paul and St. John.

3. We may now pass quickly to the Middle Ages, and what do we find there? We find that prayers for the departed had taken a grewsome form. There had come to be much talk of a place of torment called purgatory. Through this region men believed that even the best must pass. So those who were left on earth paid large sums that masses might be offered for their beloved ones that thus these souls in purgatory might make the journey quickly. We must speak carefully of all customs of religious people which are sincere; but it was a time when men who seem to have been greedy and

heartless worked upon the fears of the simple to extort their money by large promises of what certain outward rites would do for their relatives and friends. And so the triumphant trust in God's care and love for the departed faded from the earth, and men felt that they must buy from this angry Father a little pity for their beloved, now thought to be in grievous torment. We do not need to try to fix the blame for this travesty upon God's Love. It is enough to mark that to pray for the departed in any such trembling way as that is quite to forget the Saviour's promise: "I go to prepare a place for you."

4. Then, in the sixteenth century, came the Reformation. One of the developments of practice and worship which the reformers cut from our Service Books was this very praying for the departed. They felt that the prayers for the sleep of peace might seem to imply the sleep of the soul. And reading again the New Testament and the very words of the Lord, they felt the enormity of so doubting Christ's pledge that any fol-

lower of Christ could think of any need for such agonising prayers for those who had gone into God's nearer presence. So prayers for the departed were dropped from the English Prayer Book in 1552, and we have instead the Commemoration of the Saints. At every service of the Holy Communion, these words are said: "And we also bless thy holy Name for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear; beseeching thee to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom." That implies, at least, a return to the blessed confidence of Apostolic days that the departed are being cared for so well that our prayers are not needed to make God love them more. He is already loving them and caring for them with a complete and overwhelming love.

On the other hand it may fairly be said that in these days since the Reformation, that part of Christendom which has been most deeply affected by the Reformation has perhaps been a little timid about any prayers for the departed

or any commemoration of them. The experience of the Church in the Middle Ages was so terrible that the Church has straightened itself against any return to the dangerous exaggerations of that period. Fearing the lack of faith which then abounded, it fears even the innocent remembrance which is altogether good.

We may perhaps think that the Prayer Book is wisely composed in its heroic reserve, and yet for our individual selves may request for our private prayers some right and reason to include the names of those for whom we have prayed all our days. So I now drop the history and turn to certain principles which may serve to guide us.

II

1. First, then, it is a safe principle to lay down that we ought to make as little distinction as possible between ourselves and those who have vanished. Life is all one: they live and we live; and we are all joined in one blessed company

as friends and followers of Jesus Christ, as children of the same Father. A distinguished Canon of St. Paul's suggested, a few years ago, that we ought to think of the prayers of the Prayer Book as applying both to ourselves and to our vanished friends. And I answer, Why not! How beautiful it is then to say, "Lord, we pray thee that thy grace may always precede and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works," — they have their good works; we, ours: we pray that all alike may go from strength to strength. Or again, it is good to pray, "That we may obtain that which thou dost promise, make us to love that which thou dost command." Yes, we go deeper into God's love, as we make ready for it, — and so do they!

I see no reason whatever why this same thought should not go even more freely through our private prayers. Why should we stop remembering before God those who are departed? There is no reason. We are all one family as before. You remember doubtless the familiar lines which describe the prayer of one

in paradise, who thinks of her beloved on earth: —

“‘I wish that he were come to me,
For he will come,’ she said.
‘Have I not prayed in Heaven? — on earth,
Lord, Lord, has he not prayed?
Are not two prayers a perfect strength
And shall I feel afraid?’”

Yes, a cloud of witnesses surrounds us. They are part of us and we are part of them. Let us not forget that we are one and no line of division can separate us.

One has pictured the irony of those in the regions of light who, looking down upon the earth, speak of the departed as dead.

“The Dead! Is it you who call us dead?
What! You who wait for the birth,
Who wait to pass hence from the prison of sense,
From the body and brain of earth?
Oh, why do you name the living dead,
Who think and act with the force
Of the light that from far, that from star to star
Moves on in its wondrous course?”

When we pray, we may not distinguish living from living, for all are alive in Christ.

2. When we go farther than this, when we try to imagine what their conditions must be and what their especial needs, we run serious risk of going far afield. So the consummate need in our prayers for them is to pray that we may trust to God's never-failing care and love those who are dear to us. For, if we will but stop to think, we know that God who showed Himself to be so loving as men saw Him in Jesus of Nazareth, will each moment care for each child of man as we in our limited love and strength could not care for him. So we have need to cry, not, "Give my beloved rest and light and peace," but rather, "O Lord, make me to know even a little of thy great love; put it into my dim vision to see what thou art doing for my beloved; make me to know that in thy light he is conquering his darkness; make me to know that in thy love he is bringing refreshment and gladness to others; make me to know that in thy peace he is carrying peace to the bounds of thy kingdom."

I am not saying that we should be too careful of our earth-language. Prayer is

from the heart as well as from the mind. It is the breathing of love, and love feels most often what no words can describe. If it is right to let love go out in prayer to God for our kin and beloved here in the visible world, so it is equally right and good that we let love go out in prayer to God for our kin and beloved in the world invisible, which may be nearer than we think. "Remember, O Lord," we may say, "one dearer to me than life. May he be precious in thy sight. Guard him, guide him, keep him. And bring us together to thy throne at last." There is no wrong in such a prayer, there is no doubt of God's willing and doing already all these things that are prayed for. The prayer may not be logical, it may not be strictly necessary, it may not make God one whit more devoted to the beloved than He is already. But it will be a golden link to bind two souls together before the Highest Love, the Love of the Supreme Father of all. It will be joy on earth, and—who knows?—it may be one added note of joy to him who is in a more glorious light. So it is that the

daring poet imagines the prayers of earth mingling with the prayers of heaven:—

“We two will stand beside that shrine,
Occult, withheld, untrod,
Whose lamps are stirred continually,
With prayer sent up to God;
And see our old prayers, granted, melt
Each like a little cloud.”

3. While all this is admitted, one must remember the history of the Church and keep oneself free of all exaggerations which might lead to fear and distrust. Prayer is, in simplest and plainest language, talking with God. More than consoling it must be to tell God as our Father what is the love of one on earth for one whom He has taken to be a little more consciously in His presence. But as we remember our dear departed, we must never permit one faintest shadow to fall across our confidence in God's perfect and abounding love. He will do what we cannot pray for: or, more accurately, He has done it already. We must learn to bring our anxieties and fears to His feet, and there, in the light of His love, to leave them. Then we

shall not beg for the deliverance of our friends; we shall only beg that we may tell our love for them and learn from God Himself what is their joy and peace and strength in His nearer service. Should He set them hard tasks to free them from the dross of earth, we know that even those tasks, because of the sincerity of their hardness, will be joy. There is no possible avenue of God's love which we may not, must not, trust. He has taught us once for all in Christ that He wills that our first thought of Him be love. So we are bound to rely upon that love. No utilitarian consideration that it would be good for us to be a little scared so that we might the more speedily turn to being good can blot out the sublime fact that, pitiless as the laws of God's Nature may seem, His supreme and primal law is forgiveness, love. We need to accept it, freely, as it is given freely, not only for ourselves, but for our departed. So it will be that our prayers for the departed will become thanksgivings for them; so it will be that we shall see the loyalty of the Prayer Book not only to the Primi-

tive Ages of Christianity, but to the highest and most confident aspects of Christian reason. We shall gladly remember the departed before God; and we shall remember them not in fear, but in confidence, in trust, in the fulness of unity, in the light of a heavenly love.

ALMIGHTY God, who hast taught us that they who mourn shall be comforted; Grant that in all our grief we may turn to thee; and, because our need is beyond the help of men, grant us the peace of thy consolation and the joy of thy love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

ALMIGHTY God, give us grace to trust to thy never-failing care and love those who are dear to us, for this life and the life to come; knowing that thou art doing for them better things than we can desire or pray for; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

LORD, we pray thee that thou wilt open our eyes to behold the heaven

that lies about us, wherein they walk who, being born to the new life, serve thee with the clearer vision and the greater joy; through Jesus Christ our Saviour.
Amen.

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